CLASSIC POP+

eighties electronic eclectic

BUMPER 108-PAGE ISSUE

THE RETURN OF
SANANDA MAITREYA
"THE BEAR HAS TO COME OUT OF THE CAVE AGAIN!"

EURYTHMICS
CLASSIC THIRD ALBUM
TOUCH REVISITED

WIN! FESTIVAL TICKETS WORTH OVER £2,000

THE BLITZ CLUB

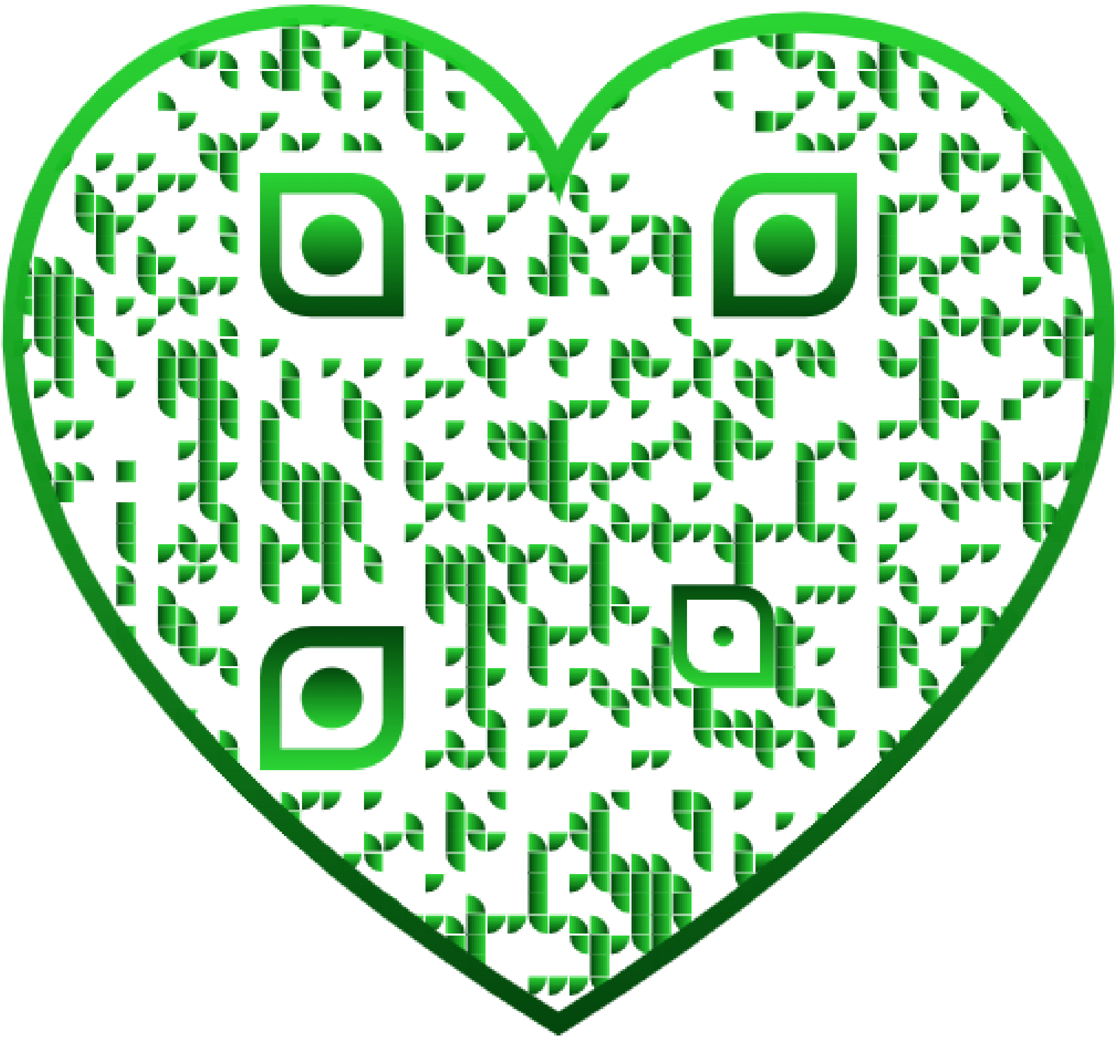
STEVE STRANGE'S NEW ROMANTIC REVOLUTION

INTERVIEWED: BOY GEORGE, RUSTY EGAN, GARY KEMP, MIDGE URE & MORE

GABRIELLE
MIXING HAPPINESS WITH HEARTBREAK

PLUS ABC • INXS Album by Album • Crowded House
The Specials • Shaznay Lewis • New Jack Swing
OMD • Top 20 Comeback Singles + much more...

9 772050 664334 87 >
ANTHEM PUBLISHING
CLASSIC POP
MAY/JUN 2024
ISSUE 87
PRICE £6.49



NOW YEARBOOK 74

03.05.24

3-LP / 4-CD / 4-CD SPECIAL EDITION

www.nowmusic.com

CLASSIC POP

WELCOME

As someone who first started going to clubs towards the end of the 80s, the height of dancefloor fashion for me was a James T-shirt and a particularly swanky pair of Nike Air Jordans. So I have to take my Reni bucket hat off in appreciation to the Blitz club crowd who *really* pulled out all of the stops when it came to dressing to the nines for a big night out.

The Blitz's DJ Rusty Egan quite rightly rejects the reductive idea that the club night he co-founded with Steve Strange invented the 80s wholesale, but it's fair to say this most unprepossessing of venues – a World War II-themed wine bar for most of the week in Covent Garden, no less – lit the fuse of the New Romantic movement, which burned brightly for the next few years around the world.

And for our latest cover feature, as Blitz finally gets the definitive compilation that it so richly deserves, we take a trip inside its hallowed doors with a star-studded cast of club regulars, including Mr Egan himself, Boy George, Midge Ure, Gary Kemp and Philip Sallon. It makes for a fascinating read, both in terms of how many of the clubgoers still talk in hushed, reverent tones about those halcyon days and how the ruthlessness of Steve Strange's door policy created something of a cultural pressure cooker, or as Boy George would have it: "Blitz was a drunken backcombed bitch fest."

Elsewhere this issue it's always a delight to welcome back Sananda Maitreya to these pages as he unveils his latest album. Once again, he's lost absolutely none of his ambition – the final part of his *Pegasus Project* is an epic 41-track affair. Packaging up the Maitreya-related action we also return to his days as Terence Trent D'Arby and revisit his equally grandiose second album, *Neither Fish Nor Flesh*. If you're among that group of music fans who only know this remarkable singer-songwriter for his *Introducing The Hardline According To...* debut LP then I can heartily recommend you dive headfirst into the rest of his wide-ranging back catalogue.

We also go behind the scenes of my favourite single of the 80s, The Specials' *Ghost Town*, with an extract from Daniel Rachel's must-read book, *Too Much Too Young: The 2 Tone Records Story*.

Finally, we have more than £2,000 worth of tickets to give away to readers as part of this year's *Classic Pop* 2024 festival special. Good luck, you've got to be in it to win it...

Enjoy the issue!

Steve Harnell, Editor

Follow me on X (Twitter): @steve_harnell

87

@ClassicPopMag

SUBSCRIBE

Subscribe to *Classic Pop* now and you'll receive a special Blitz club collectable cover – our latest features a Peter Ashworth photograph of DJ Rusty Egan taken in Mayfair in 1979. Turn to pages 8-9 for details about how to subscribe and our latest reader offer.

SCAN TO FIND OUT MORE

TRY FOR JUST £1

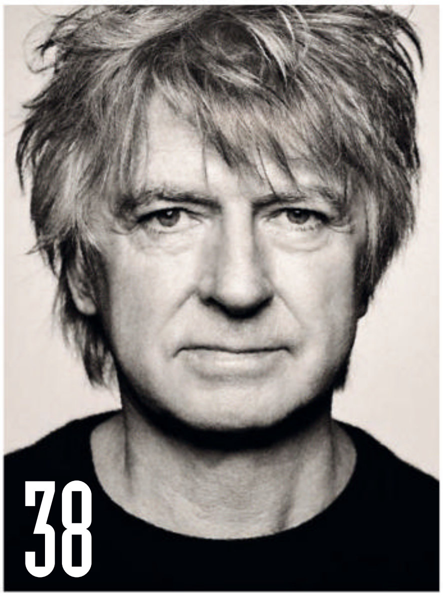
CLASSIC POP

CONTENTS

87

FOLLOW US

@ClassicPopMag



FEATURES

THE BLITZ CLUB 24
As a definitive Blitz club compilation finally sees the light of day, Rusty Egan, Boy George, Midge Ure, Gary Kemp, Philip Sallon and Sue Scadding return us to the tiny London club that birthed an 80s revolution

CLASSIC ALBUM 32
Eurythmics' second LP to be released in a single year, the duo's third long-player *Touch* skipped across multiple genres – plus, with all three of its singles reaching the Top 10, it gave Annie and Dave their first UK No.1 album

CROWDED HOUSE 38
As they unveil their stunning new album, *Gravity Stairs*, Crowded House's Neil Finn and Nick Seymour share their thoughts on stardom, tragedy and the ultimate prize

ALBUM BY ALBUM 44
We examine INXS's albums discography tracking the Aussie national treasures' rise from pub rockers to stadium-filling superstars

SANANDA MAITREYA 50
As the final chapter of his Prometheus trilogy is released, *CP* finds out about rebirth, the influence of kids' TV, and his UK live return

FESTIVAL SPECIAL 2024 58
Our selection of this summer's pop-centric weekenders – and a chance to win tickets to Victorious Festival and Camp Bestival

THE SPECIALS 66
A fascinating insight into the making of the ska legends' classic No.1 single *Ghost Town*, taken from Daniel Rachel's new book *Too Much Too Young – The 2 Tone Records Story*

GET YOUR FIRST 3 ISSUES FOR £1

TRY *CLASSIC POP* FOR A FRACTION OF THE PRICE – EASY, RISK-FREE, AND ONLY £1 WHEN YOU JOIN US TODAY!

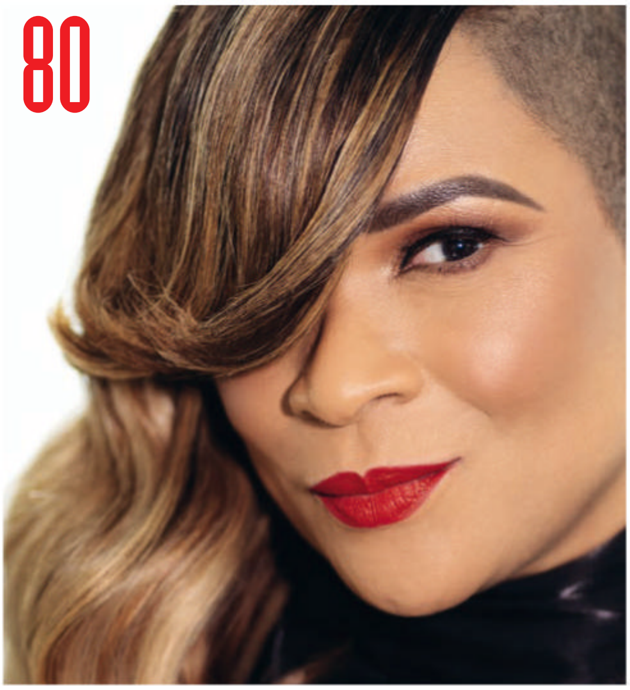
SCAN THE QR CODE OR TURN TO PAGES 8-9 FOR MORE DETAILS

44

50

66

80



87

POPSCENE: NEW JACK SWING 74
When the States danced to the sampled beats of a fresh new urban R&B fusion...

TOP 20 COMEBACK SINGLES 76
From Kate Bush to Tears For Fears, here's our pick of the strongest returns to the pop fray

GABRIELLE 80
CP meets the much-loved singer to hear about his diverse new studio album

NEWS

POP-UP 10
Marc Almond returns, Fairground Attraction and The Grid reform – and Karl Wallinger RIP

Q&A: BRIGHT LIGHT BRIGHT LIGHT 12
Rod Thomas opens up about his many starlit collaborations and new album *Enjoy Life*

1-HIT WONDER 14
Rush Hour by Jane Wiedlin

MY POP LIFE 15
Actor James Dreyfus on his musical soft spots

Q&A: SHAZNAY LEWIS 16
We speak to the ex-All Saint about her new solo album and upcoming live shows

LOST & FOUND 18
A Night To Remember by Cyndi Lauper

REGULARS

A TO Z OF POP 20
N is for... Nineteen ninety-nine (BPM)

THIS MONTH IN POP 22
Rewind to May 1980

FORGET ME NOT 56
Reappraising Terence Trent D'Arby's ambitious and much underrated second album

TOP 10: 14 MAY 1983 64
Classics from Spandau Ballet and Tears For Fears, plus The Human League vs. Heaven 17

CLASSIC POP MOMENT 106
Sheena Easton hits No.1 in the US

REVIEWS

THE HOT LIST 86
Billy Idol, Ladsclub, Bruce Hornsby & YMUSIC (BRHYM), Vampire Weekend

NEW RELEASES 87
Pet Shop Boys, Paul Weller, Mark Knopfler, Crowded House, Shaznay Lewis, Sananda Maitreya, Gabrielle, The Woodentops, The Blow Monkeys, The Zutons, Richard Hawley, Lenny Kravitz, Paraorchestra, A Certain Ratio, Fabiana Palladino, Barry Adamson, Bright Light Bright Light, Trifecta, Michael Head & The Red Elastic Band, Judie Tzuke, Alfie Templeman

REISSUES 94
Various – *Rusty Egan Presents BLITZED!*, Blancmange, Girls Aloud, Electribe 101, Sparks/Noël, Air, Various – *Now Yearbook 74, Now Yearbook 90 Extra, Now 12" 80s: 1982 Part 2, Now 80s Dancefloor: R&B & Funk*, Keane, Tina Turner, Flowered Up, Belinda Carlisle, China Crisis, The Durutti Column, The Cure, Manic Street Preachers, Cranes, Xmal Deutschland, Looper, Laura Branigan, The Toy Dolls, Garbage

LIVE 101
ABC, OMD, Lust For Life, Goldfrapp

BOOKS 105
ABBA On Record: Packaged, Promoted, Reviewed by Carl Magnus Palm; *The Rejects: An Alternative History Of Popular Music* by Jamie Collinson; *Springsteen: Album By Album* by Ryan White; *Bowie Odyssey 74* by Simon Goddard

CLASSIC POP WHO'S WHO

87

Anthem Publishing
Suite 6, Piccadilly House,
London Road, Bath, BA1 6PL
Tel +44 (0)1225 489 984
www.classicpopmag.com

Cover image ©Simon Fowler

Subscriber cover image ©Peter Ashworth

All other magazine images ©Getty, except where stated

WHICH BLITZ CLUB SONG WOULD GET YOU ON THE DANCEFLOOR?

EDITOR **Steve Harnell**
steve.harnell@anthem.co.uk
Only After Dark – Mick Ronson *1

SENIOR ART EDITOR **Alex Duce**
alex.duce@anthem.co.uk
A Forest – The Cure

ADVERTISING MANAGER
Leah Fitz-Henry
leah.fitz-henry@anthem.co.uk
Heart Of Glass – Blondie

SUB-EDITOR **Rik Flynn**
Moscow Discow – Telex *2

SENIOR MARKETING EXECUTIVE
Rosie Pankhurst
rosie.pankhurst@anthem.co.uk
La Vie En Rose – Grace Jones

MARKETING ASSISTANT **Alice Cavey**
alice.cavey@anthem.co.uk
Pop Muzik – M

DIGITAL EDITOR **Dan Biggane**
The Damned Don't Cry – Visage

CREATIVE DIRECTOR **Jenny Cook**
jenny.cook@anthem.co.uk
Radioactivity – Kraftwerk

FOUNDER, EDITOR-AT-LARGE **Ian Peel**
New Girls Neutrons – Vice Versa

CEO **Jon Bickley**
jon.bickley@anthem.co.uk
Burning Car – John Foxx

MANAGING DIRECTOR **Simon Lewis**
simon.lewis@anthem.co.uk
Willie And The Hand Jive – Rinder & Lewis *3

CONTRIBUTORS

Jeremy Allen
Life In Tokyo – Japan

Lee Campbell
Shadowplay – Joy Division

John Earls
Supernature – Cerrone *4

Dave Freak
No G.D.M. – Gina X Performance

Paul Kirkley
Changeling – Simple Minds *5

Mark Lindores
Heart Of Glass – Blondie

Steve O'Brien
The Man Who Sold The World – Lulu

Jon O'Brien
Supernature – Cerrone *6

Barry Page
Electricity – Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark

Felix Rowe
The Eve Of The War (Disco Remix) – Jeff Wayne

Matthew Rudd
A Forest – The Cure

Beth Simpson
Put Your Love In Me – Hot Chocolate

Ian Wade
Being Boiled – The Human League *7

Wyndham Wallace
Pop Muzik – M

Jonathan Wright
Dream Baby Dream (Long Version) – Suicide

Annie Zaleski
To Cut A Long Story Short – Spandau Ballet *8

SOUNDBITES

*1 "A crackling Ronson glam rocker that The Human League later reinvented as a synth-pop banger for *Travelogue*."

*2 "Love this tune, but also their sense of humour. They entered Eurovision with a song called *Euro-Vision* and actually *aimed* to finish last (they came second to last)."

*3 "Rock'n'roll on disco steroids."

*4 "I'm a terrible dancer, but even I could frug to most of Rusty Egan's choices."

*5 "Overground, underground, pulsating through…" If that's not the perfect manifesto for a Blitz floorfiller, I don't know what is."

*6 "A dystopian disco classic."

*7 "I once halted a conversation and literally ran in from a smoking area in order to dance to it."

*7 "My younger self would have danced in waif-like fashion to this, savouring its repetitious eloquence."

*8 "A heavenly combination of groove, melodrama and that whirling synth."

ANTHEM PUBLISHING PPA

All content copyright Anthem Publishing Ltd 2024, all rights reserved. While we make every effort to ensure the factual content of *Classic Pop* magazine is correct, we cannot take any responsibility nor be held accountable for any factual errors printed. Please make every effort to check quoted prices and product specifications with manufacturers prior to purchase. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or resold without prior consent of Anthem Publishing Ltd. *Classic Pop* magazine recognises all copyrights contained within the issue. Where possible, we acknowledge the copyright holder. All paper used in this publication comes from responsibly managed forests.

FSC www.fsc.org MIX Paper from responsible sources FSC® C013669

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

The winner of the Best Writer, Specialist category, in 2022's British Society of Magazine Editors Awards, our latest issue sees **John Earls** rounding up Rusty Egan, Boy George, Midge Ure and Gary Kemp for our Blitz club cover feature. He also meets Sananda Maitreya and oversees our new albums and reissues reviews section.

Paul Kirkley makes his living from interviewing famous people with much more interesting and glamorous lives than his own. He is also, to the best of his knowledge, the only paid TV critic for a national supermarket chain. This issue, Paul catches up with Neil Finn and Nick Seymour as Crowded House return with their superb latest studio album, *Gravity Stairs*, which also bags our Best New Release award.

Steve O'Brien has written for such publications as *The Guardian*, *Radio Times*, *The New Statesman* and *Empire*. For *Classic Pop*, he meets Gabrielle, who reveals all about her new album, *A Place In Your Heart*, chats to Shaznay Lewis as she reboots her solo career after 20 years, and delves into the musical influences of actor James Dreyfus for our latest *My Pop Life* Q&A.

SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES **+44 (0)1371 853609** *shop@anthem.co.uk*
PRINTING **William Gibbons & Son** *Tel* +44 (0)1902 730011 DISTRIBUTION **Marketforce UK** 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London W2 6QA
Tel 0330 390 6464 | Hello@Marketforce.co.uk LICENSING ENQUIRIES **Regina Erak** *Telephone* +44 (0)7753 811622 *regina.erak@gmail.com*

Fairground Attraction

Beautiful Happening

REFORMING FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 35 YEARS

PERFORMING ALL THE HITS FROM 'THE FIRST OF A MILLION KISSES'
ALONGSIDE TRACKS FROM THE UPCOMING NEW ALBUM AND MORE

SEPTEMBER '24

28 Wolverhampton University of Wolverhampton at The Civic Hall
29 Manchester Opera House

OCTOBER '24

01 York Barbican
03 Gateshead The Glasshouse International Centre for Music
04 Nottingham Royal Concert Hall
05 London Royal Festival Hall
07 Cambridge Corn Exchange
08 Brighton Dome
10 Oxford New Theatre
11 Bristol Beacon
14 Perth Concert Hall
16 Aberdeen Music Hall
17 Glasgow Royal Concert Hall
18 Edinburgh Usher Hall

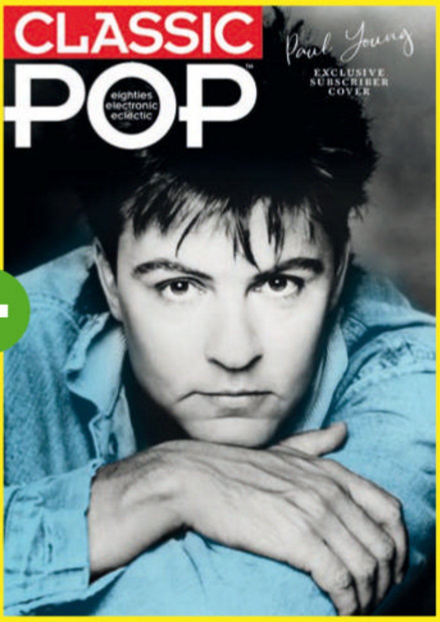
aegpresents.co.uk regularmusic.com

AEG Presents and Regular Music in association with CAA

NEW SINGLE
'WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD?'
OUT NOW

CLASSIC POP

GET YOUR FIRST 3 ISSUES FOR £1



WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE TODAY

SUBSCRIBE EASILY AT

classicpopmag.com/spring24

TRY FOR JUST £1

TRY *CLASSIC POP* FOR A FRACTION OF THE PRICE – EASY, RISK-FREE, AND ONLY £1 WHEN YOU JOIN US TODAY!

3 REASONS TO JOIN THE *CLASSIC POP* COMMUNITY

+ Enjoy reading about all your pop favourites without any of the hassle – every single issue delivered direct to your door
+ Search for any article that interests you with access to our digital library of every past issue
+ Curate your collection with exclusive subscriber covers and discounts on all our special editions

OPEN THE CAMERA ON YOUR PHONE, SCAN THIS CODE AND FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS TO ACCESS YOUR SPECIAL OFFER

TERMS & CONDITIONS: £1 offer is available for UK subscribers using recurring payments. After the first 3 issues, price will step-up to £15 every 6 months. *Classic Pop* is published 6 times per year. To order your subscription by phone, call (+44) 01371 853609 and quote the offer code. **OFFER CODE:** SPR24CLPP **OFFER ENDS:** 30 June 2024.

OBITUARY

KARL WALLINGER

19 OCTOBER 1957 – 10 MARCH 2024

Karl Wallinger, the multi-talented singer-songwriter famed for his work with World Party and The Waterboys, died on 10 March at the age of 66.

Leading the tributes on social media was The Waterboys frontman, Mike Scott, who wrote: "Travel on well my old friend. You are one of the finest musicians I've ever known."

Born in Prestatyn in North Wales, Wallinger showed musical promise from an early age and was an avid listener of The Beatles, The Beach Boys, Bob Dylan and The Kinks. Classically trained to play the piano and oboe as a youngster, he developed his musical skills at Charterhouse public school in Surrey after gaining a scholarship from Eton College.

After heading to London to pursue a career in music, he was briefly the musical director of the *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, before joining The Waterboys in 1983.

Hired to play keyboards, he debuted on the band's second album *A Pagan Place* in 1984. Impressed by his multi-instrumental and production skills in the studio, Mike Scott utilised Wallinger's talents to great effect on the band's landmark third LP, *This Is The Sea*, featuring the hit single *The Whole Of The Moon*.

Aware that his own creative ambitions would inevitably conflict with that of Scott's, Wallinger decided to leave the band in 1985 and concentrate on his own music career.

Working as World Party, he scored Top 40 hits with *Put The Message In The Box*, *Is It Like Today?* *All I Gave* and *Beautiful Dream*, and released five studio LPs including *Bang!*, which reached No.2 on the UK Albums Chart in 1993.

In 1997, *She's The One*, from World Party's fourth release *Egyptology*, won an Ivor Novello Award and, two years later, Robbie Williams' cover version would top the UK Singles Chart.

Wallinger suffered a brain aneurysm that nearly claimed his life in 2001. Forced to stop performing for five years after undergoing surgery, he later returned to touring when he'd relearned how to speak and play instruments.

Talking with theartsdesk.com in 2012, he revealed how he wanted to make good use of his time and that he'd become more "philosophical about the nature of existence". He added: "What makes you happy can be really simplified, because just being around is pretty good after that kind of thing. It makes you more down to earth in a way, which is good, although I never felt like I wanted to rule the world."

While World Party would never make another album after 2000's *Dumbing Up*, Peter Gabriel's Real World Records did release *Big Blue Ball* in 2008. The result of a collaboration between Gabriel and Wallinger during the summers of 1991, 1992 and 1995, the project also featured guest artists including Sinéad O'Connor, with whom Wallinger was familiar having worked on her 1987 debut *The Lion And The Cobra* as well as the first two World Party LPs *Private Revolution* in 1987 and 1990's *Goodbye Jumbo*.

Responding to the news of Wallinger's passing, Gabriel posted on social media: "Shocked and saddened to learn we no longer have Karl Wallinger with us. I had admired his work from afar, but it was when we did a Real World Recording Week together that I had the most creative and fun week I have ever had in the studio. Karl was overflowing with wonderful musical ideas that blew us all away, all delivered with terrible jokes that had us laughing uncontrollably all day and night."

> "KARL WAS OVERFLOWING WITH WONDERFUL MUSICAL IDEAS THAT BLEW US ALL AWAY"
> PETER GABRIEL

"He was such a gifted, natural writer and player, it was a tap that he could turn on at will, effortlessly," the statement continued. "Like many a great comic and many great musicians, melancholy was strong in the mix, but his charm, humility, intelligence, and razor-sharp wit made him great company. Karl was an abundant talent and we have been given extraordinary music and memories from this extraordinary man."

Wallinger is survived by his wife, Suzie Zamit, their son, Louis, daughter, Nancy, and two grandchildren.

© Iñigo Viñas

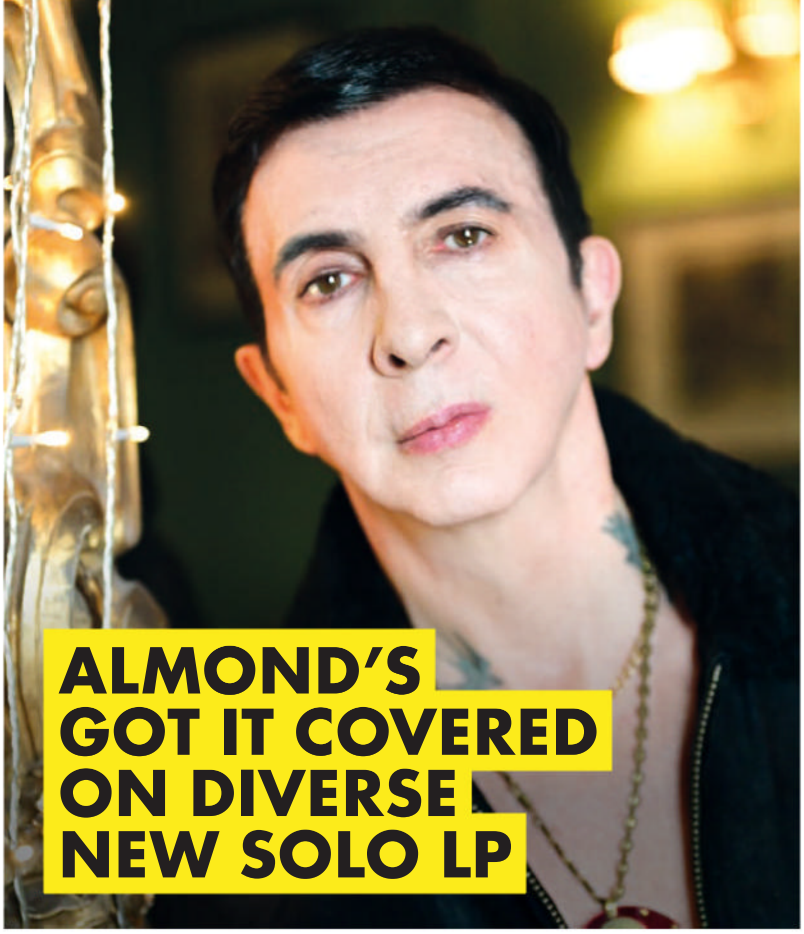
CHERRY PICKS OVER HER FRUITFUL LIFE IN MUSIC

Neneh Cherry is promising to tie up her complex life story to date in forthcoming autobiography, *A Thousand Threads*.

From her childhood growing up in a village in rural Sweden, the story follows Cherry's start in music with ground-breaking punk bands The Slits and Rip Rig + Panic, before rising to global fame as a solo artist with debut album *Raw Like Sushi* in 1989.

The vivid memoir, finds the Swedish singer-songwriter, rapper and producer remembering the highs and lows, the friendships and loves, and the addictions and traumas that have shaped her both as a woman and artist.

A Thousand Threads will be published by Fern Press on 3 October.



© Etienne Gilfillan

ALMOND'S GOT IT COVERED ON DIVERSE NEW SOLO LP

Marc Almond has announced his solo return with a diverse new covers album, *I'm Not Anyone*, set for release on 12 July.

"A great song can never die and should always find a new life and audience," says Almond about the record. "I can't simply just sing any song; I have to feel that if I could, I would have written it myself – it's just that someone else said it first, and far better than me."

Lead single, *Elusive Butterfly*, finds Marc revisiting Bob Lind's esoteric 1965 folk classic, while the Paul Anka-penned title track is an emotional ballad about defiance and pride featuring Almond's trademark emotive delivery.

Other highlights include interpretations of Don McLean's powerful *Chain Lightning* and the Soft Cell singer's duet with Bryan Chambers on a reworking of Mahalia Jackson's gospel lament *Trouble Of The World*.

Marc adds: "I always approach curating an album of covers with a lot of joy as it means a year or so of listening to songs, old and new, making lists from which I add or subtract songs and in the process discover, or rediscover, some half-forgotten gems. Living now in Portugal, I've found the time to not only reflect on my life but to also rediscover my love for music and songs.

"I finally reached a selection of songs that express where I am in my life today and how I feel about the world and my place in it. These aren't particularly storytelling songs (though for me, lyrics always come first) but more than ever this time I've gone for how a song makes me feel and the emotional resonance it holds – reflective songs for an older artist, perhaps.

"I don't change a song too much, take it too far away from why I like it," he continued. "Too much emphasis is made on reinvention. I like to think that I'm bringing a song in a new light to my audience who might not have heard it before or haven't considered it until they've heard me sing it. Then they may reevaluate it.

"I could go through the album song by song but that takes away the joy of how you may hear it, and to me what is important is the overall feel."

I'm Not Anyone also features his interpretations of songs by artists including Blue Cheer, Marmalade, King Crimson, Colin Blunstone, Johnny Rivers and Neil Diamond.

Celebrating his 45th year in music, Almond follows the LP's release with a UK headline tour in September. In the spirit of the new LP, the setlist will consist only of covers. He also tours with Jools Holland from October to the end of December.

Wets and Heather Small join forces for tour

After a sold-out jaunt earlier this year, Wet Wet Wet have announced a major tour of the UK in 2025. Featuring founding member Graeme Clark and accompanied by long-standing guitarist Graeme Duffin, the band, now fronted by Kevin Simm, will perform two sets of dates in 2025 – the first run taking place in January and February, followed by another scheduled for October. The Wets will be supported by special guest Heather Small. Small, who rose to fame as the lead vocalist of M People, said: "I'm a fan of Wet Wet Wet's music, so to be able to share these stages with them will be a real pleasure. It's going to be one big party."

The first leg kicks off on 28 January 2025 in Cambridge and concludes in Dundee on 9 February, while the autumn dates open in Glasgow on 10 October before drawing to a close on 26 October at London's Indigo at the O2.

Visit wetwetwet.co.uk for more details.

The Grid set to plug themselves back in

With Marc Almond announcing his solo return, Soft Cell bandmate Dave Ball has reconvened The Grid for the electronic outfit's first live show in more than 20 years.

Ball will reunite with Richard Norris for an exclusive UK performance as part of Heritage Live 2024, which is headlined by Pete Tong's Ibiza Classics show in the grounds of Englefield House, Berkshire, on 20 July. Emerging out of the UK Acid House scene of the late 80s, The Grid racked up a number of hits across their career including the Balearic classic *Flotation* and million-selling *Swamp Thing*. Also appearing at this year's Heritage Live 2024 will be Madness on 19 July and Elbow on 21 July.

The Times are a changin' for Travis

© Steve Gullick

Indie outfit Travis return with a brand new album, *L.A. Times*, this summer. Released on 12 July, frontman Fran Healy revealed that the Glaswegian quartet have dug deep: "*L.A. Times* is our most personal album since *The Man Who*. There was a lot of big stuff to write about back then, the tectonic plates had shifted in my life. I was 22 when I was writing those songs. They were my therapy. Over 20 years later and the plates have shifted again."

Travis begin their summer performing with The Killers across their 16-date UK arena tour in June and July, with more shows in the UK and Europe to be announced.

L.A. Times will be available digitally, on CD and vinyl, as well as a limited deluxe 2CD package which includes a stripped-back version of the LP. Limited vinyl options are on sale through HMV, indie shops and via the band's store.

***Enjoy Youth*'s guest list features Ultra Naté, Richard X, Beth Hirsch, Berri and Babydaddy**

BRIGHT LIGHT BRIGHT LIGHT

Q+A

ROD THOMAS TAKES US THROUGH THE STARRY COLLABORATIONS AND INSPIRATIONS BEHIND HIS EBULLIENT FIFTH ALBUM *ENJOY LIFE*

JEREMY ALLEN

Welsh musician and singer Rod Thomas, aka Bright Light Bright Light, is back with *Enjoy Youth*, a 90s-inspired, house-infused trip through late adolescence, seen through the prism of experience. The New York-based 41-year-old discusses coming out in the Valleys and relocating Stateside, as well as collaborating with Ultra Naté and finding out he's funny while lunching with Elton and Lulu…

What's the significance of the title *Enjoy Youth*?
The album was inspired by my friend, Janice, who moved to France when she was 15 to be an au pair. We met on an AOL chat room back in the day. I used to visit her while she was staying with this very rich family in Paris. She lived on the top floor, and I remember going past the family one night on the way to a bar, slightly underage. The grandmother asked where we were going and we said to a club. And she went, "Oh, enjoy youth!" It was the funniest thing and she looked so happy. She was so excited for us. For the last 20-something years, that has stuck in my brain, and I thought it was such a fabulous little mantra.

Did you enjoy youth when you were young?
Yeah, it was a mixed bag. It wasn't a bad youth at all, but coming out in Wales during the 90s was pretty shit. There's a lot of pressure on people, whether you're gay or just not the same as everybody else. You just feel like, 'Oh, I can't really stay here'. Moving to London was probably when I first started to really see myself as part of real life.

You moved to New York in 2013. Did that have any impact on you creatively?
Definitely. Having a clean slate at the age of 30 was actually lifesaving. I felt like the music industry in London absolutely couldn't have given less of a fuck about me if they'd tried. I'd spoken to every single A&R, every single publisher, and they just all decided that they didn't want me there, which was fine. I moved to New York and people were just like, 'Oh my God, that's really cool. Come and work on this with me, come and sing on my show, let's write a song together…' It was just so different.

Would you say this new album is a nostalgic record?
It's probably more reverence than nostalgia, if that makes sense. I didn't want to recreate the 90s because there's enough people doing that with much bigger budgets. But I thought it'd be fun to show my cards with some of what influenced me growing up. For instance, people wrote Berri off as a one-hit wonder, but she has one of the best voices I've recorded. I sent her the instrumental and the vocals that came back were flawless.

And Ultra Naté is blessed in that department, too, isn't she?
Oh my god, *Free* was on the radio all the time when I was at secondary school, and I just remember hearing that voice and feeling like she didn't really sound like anything else. It was a little bit left field as a dance record because it had disco and soul roots. I've been buying her records for such a long time and now I get to do a song with her. It's just amazing and she's a brilliant, brilliant woman. Just the nicest person.

***You Want My…* seems to be a nod to both the Pet Shop Boys and George Michael. Is that the case?**
I was just trying to do songs that maybe I hadn't really done before. [Producer] Ian [Masterson] sent me that instrumental which I was listening to at home, and in the chorus, there's this little hi-hat that sounded like it was saying 'sex'. And I was like, 'Ooh, that's a fun word to use as a starting point.' I'd never really written about sex explicitly before.

ELTON WAS REALLY INSTRUMENTAL IN ME BELIEVING I COULD DO ANYTHING WITH MYSELF IN MUSIC

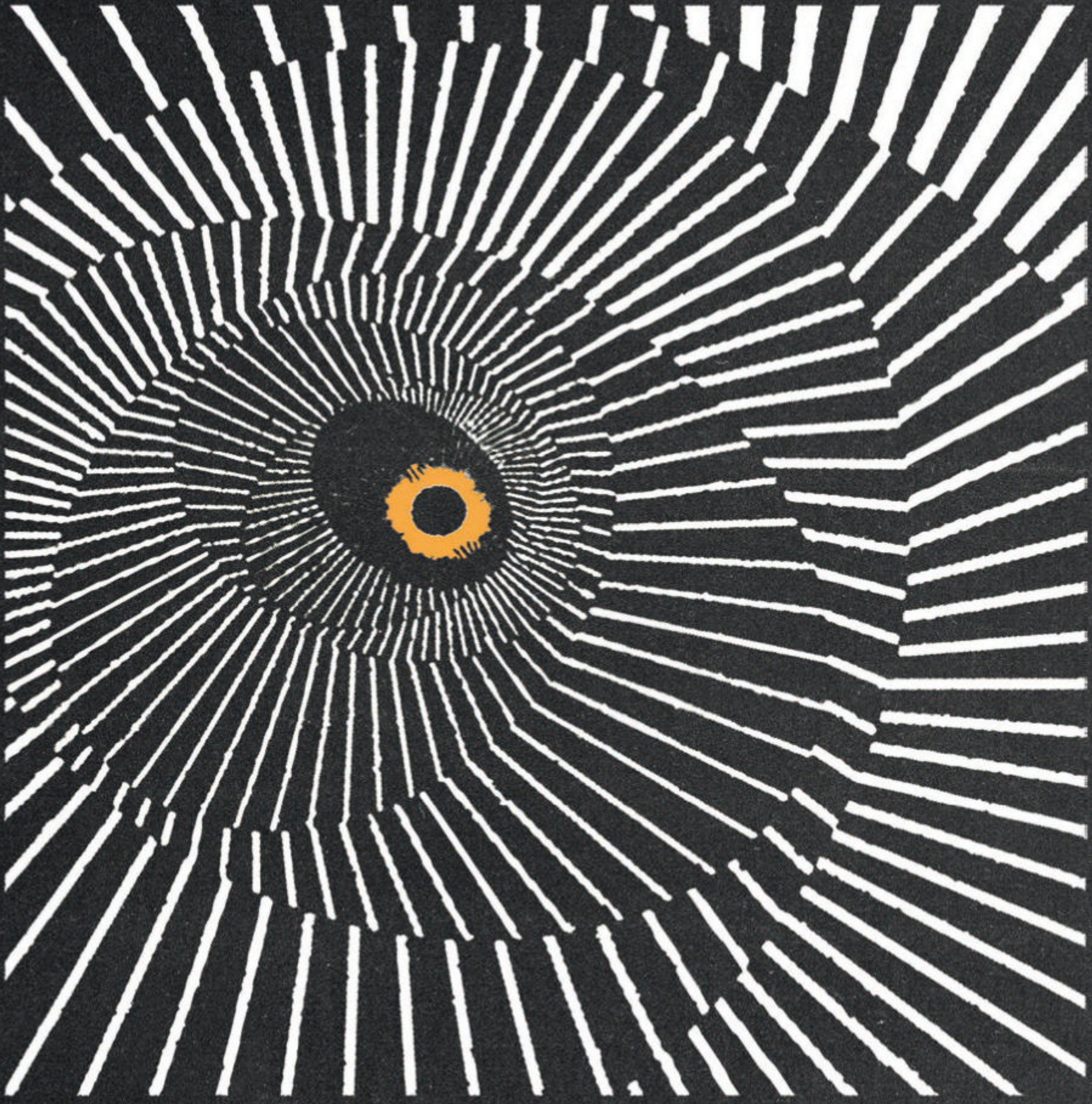
You've had more guests than *Wogan* on your records, and one very special guest from previous albums is Elton John. He's been very supportive hasn't he?
He was really instrumental in me believing I could do anything with myself in music. We're still good friends. I went and hung out with him in L.A. in November and it was amazing. I'm sure you're aware that he's a very big music fan and when I first met him, it was before I'd done an album. I was very insecure about myself and very shy. Then when the album came out I went for lunch with him and Lulu, and he was like, 'Oh, you're actually really funny. You were really shy when I met you'. I was like, 'You know that you're fucking Elton John, right?' And he's like, 'Oh yeah, I forget that sometimes.' ■

● ***Enjoy Youth* is released via YSKWN on 17 May and reviewed on page 93**

elbow

AUDIO VERTIGO

ARENA TOUR 2024



MAY 2024

PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS The WAEVE
(GRAHAM COXON & ROSE ELINOR DOUGALL)

07 SOLD OUT BRIGHTON Centre
09 LONDON The O2
10 BIRMINGHAM Resorts World Arena
11 GLASGOW OVO Hydro
12 LEEDS First Direct Arena
14 MANCHESTER Co-op Live
15 NOTTINGHAM Motorpoint Arena

ELBOW.CO.UK | AEGPRESENTS.CO.UK | AXS.COM | TICKETMASTER.CO.UK | SEETICKETS.COM

AEG PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH X-RAY

© Mark Moody

PERFECT TIMING FOR FAIRGROUND ATTRACTION REUNION

The original line-up of Fairground Attraction, including Eddi Reader and Mark Nevin, have revealed details of a reunion after almost 35 years apart that includes a new studio album and 14-date UK tour.

To launch the comeback, the band unveiled a Nevin-penned new single, *What's Wrong With The World?*. The guitarist said: "I can't tell you how wonderful it is to be back together, making music again. I think we had all given up hope that it would ever happen a long time ago. It is almost spooky, as though we are ghosts, who have come back to life, but something happens between us when we play together. Time evaporates and it could all have been yesterday."

The band were double BRIT Award winners in 1989, with *Perfect* taking home the Best British Single prize and *The First Of A Million Kisses* winning Best British Album.

Following the split in 1990, Reader launched a successful solo career recording 12 critically-acclaimed studio LPs, notably *Sings The Songs of Robert Burns* – her interpretation of the poems of Scotland's national bard – which gained her honorary degrees from five universities, plus an MBE for outstanding contributions to the arts. Nevin, as well as making seven solo LPs of his own, collaborated with various artists including Morrissey and Kirsty MacColl.

After decades apart, Reader and Nevin reconnected last year with the singer joining the guitarist at one of his solo shows to sing Fairground Attraction favourite *Allelujah*.

The band head out on their first UK and Ireland tour since their split, beginning on 28 September in Wolverhampton and ending in Edinburgh on 18 October. Other dates include London's Royal Festival Hall and the Royal Concert Hall in Glasgow.

EPIC NEW BOWIE BOXSET WILL CHART ZIGGY ERA

A new David Bowie boxset will chronicle the star's early rise to fame during his glam rock era.

The 5CD and 1 Blu-ray set, *David Bowie Rock 'N' Roll Star!*, charts his journey from February 1971 through to 1972's *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars* LP. With demos, BBC sessions, singles, live songs and outtakes, the set contains 29 unreleased tracks.

Highlights include an alternative take of *Lady Stardust*, an unheard version of *Shadow Man* plus a cover of The Who's *I Can't Explain*.

The Blu-ray also includes a version of the *Ziggy Stardust* LP, *Waiting In The Sky (Before The Starman Came To Earth)*, taken from 1971 tapes, which features an alternative running order and four songs that didn't make the cut.

The boxset features two books with memorabilia, rare photos, notes and interviews, plus a reproduction of Bowie's personal Ziggy Stardust-era notebooks. *David Bowie Rock 'N' Roll Star!* is released on 14 June via Parlophone.

1 HIT WONDER

RUSH HOUR
JANE WIEDLIN

Jane Wiedlin had a considerable influence on the American New Wave as co-founder of the Go-Go's, but widespread recognition in the UK eventually only came via this one superb solo single.

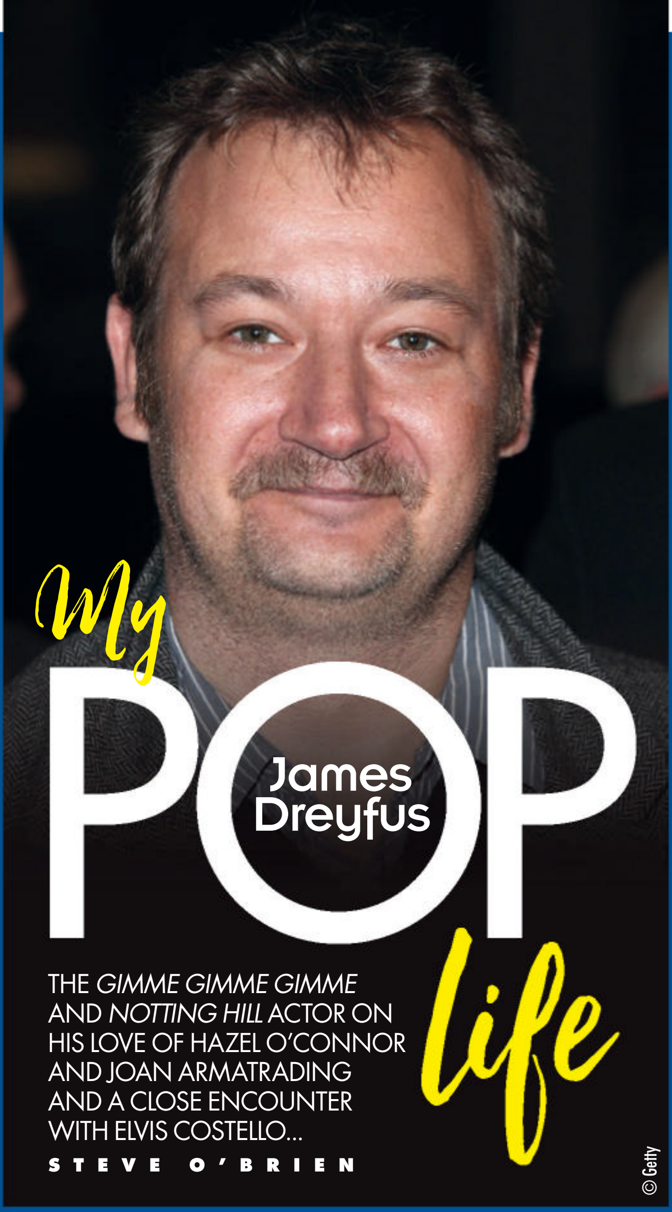
Rush Hour was a classic driving pop song. The metaphors ("My heart is beating faster now, as the traffic's slowing down/ When you're at the wheel, I can't believe the way I feel") made it clear that negotiating heavy gridlocks weren't literally on Wiedlin's mind, but alongside the pumping synth-pop hook, singalong chorus and Jane's own delightful girlish vocals, it was absolutely made for daytime radio.

The solo success a few months before of her Go-Go's chum Belinda Carlisle allowed Wiedlin publicity that otherwise may not have happened, but nevertheless the song was always a gimme.

A welcome melodic alternative to a chart dominated at the time by divisive cover versions, remixes and dance music, it climbed the UK Top 40 slowly, peaking at No.12. Radio stations then paid her to re-record the chorus for bespoke breakfast show jingles – for some years after, morning listeners to London's Capital Radio could hear Wiedlin singing "It's Tarrant in the rush hour".

A follow-up single and album charted without being noticed. Interest in the Go-Go's (who'd split in 1985) then rekindled enough for Wiedlin to make a career from reunions – initially onstage, then eventually back in the studio. They disbanded once again in 2022.

MATTHEW RUDD IS THE HOST OF FORGOTTEN 80s ON ABSOLUTE 80s



My POP life

James Dreyfus

THE *GIMME GIMME GIMME* AND *NOTTING HILL* ACTOR ON HIS LOVE OF HAZEL O'CONNOR AND JOAN ARMATRADING AND A CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH ELVIS COSTELLO...

STEVE O'BRIEN

© Getty

What was the first pop song you remember truly loving?
It has to be way back in the 70s. My mum had a lot of Carole King. I remember enjoying *Tapestry* and recall loving those early ABBA albums. The first song I remember really being into, though, was *Seasons In The Sun* by Terry Jacks. There was also *Love Is In The Air* by John Paul Young and *Ain't No Stopping Us Now* by McFadden And Whitehead. Those are my earliest memories.

Do you have a favourite album?
If you could put every Joan Armatrading track onto an album, that would be it. She has had the biggest effect on my life. In those seminal moments, it was always Joan Armatrading, to this day. So if you could mash every single one of her songs onto a triple album I would take that to my desert island. And if I'm allowed any more favourites, I'll pick Kate Bush's *The Kick Inside* and Elton John's *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road.*

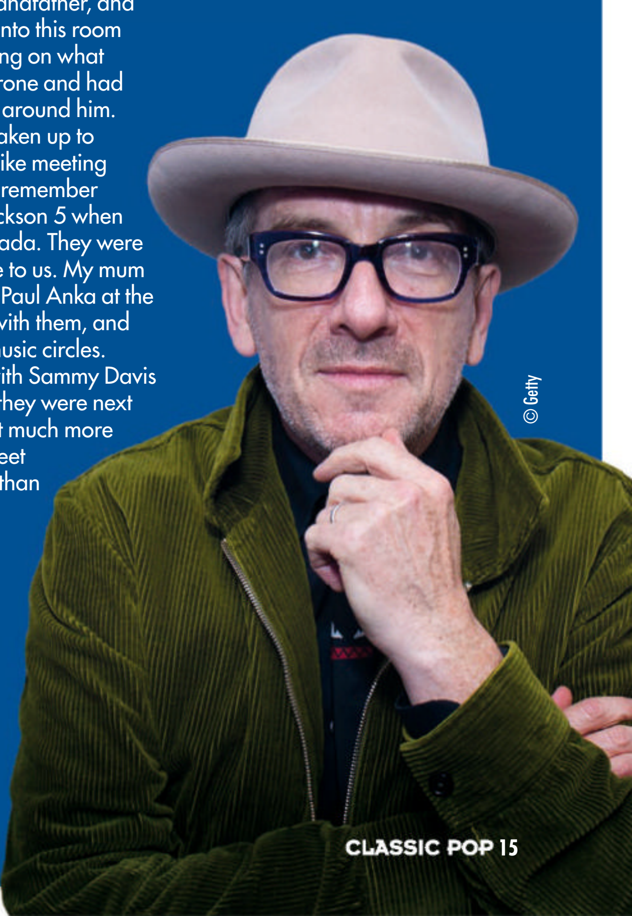
Are there any contemporary artists that excite you?
Not really. This is where I'm terrible. Music for me ended a while back. Anything after 2000 I'm not good on. I sort of stopped because I never heard anything that really interested me. Obviously there have been a few, but I'm basically very stuck in the 70s and 80s and some of the 90s.

Tell us about a few of your favourite gigs.
The last one I went to was Hazel O'Connor, about five years ago. I went to see her perform *Breaking Glass* and *Sons And Lovers* – that was phenomenal. *Breaking Glass* is one of my favourite movies. You know when you go to a gig and can recite all the words, that was one of them. I'm trying to think of some other highlights... I saw Joan Armatrading at the Royal Albert Hall, that was great, and also Marc Almond. I don't go very often, though, as I don't like crowds. I don't go to any big places, but if they're doing it in a theatre, I'll go.

Have you ever met any of your musical heroes?
I met Elvis Costello, that was very exciting. He was lovely. It was at the premiere of *Notting Hill* and he had about five ladies attached to his arm. He strolled over to me and said something quite complimentary about my performance, and I just stood there like a goon. I also remember, when I was about six or seven, being taken to see Frank Sinatra in Monte Carlo. He knew my grandfather, and we were taken into this room and he was sitting on what looked like a throne and had bodyguards all around him. We were then taken up to him and it was like meeting the Pope. I also remember meeting The Jackson 5 when we lived in Nevada. They were at the next table to us. My mum was married to Paul Anka at the time, so I lived with them, and they mixed in music circles. I used to play with Sammy Davis Jr's children as they were next door. I do find it much more interesting to meet musical heroes than acting ones.

Is there a song that's guaranteed to get you up and dancing?
Depending on what I've had to drink, but pretty much any song that was played in the 80s at school discos. Things like *Come On Eileen* or Bad Manners' *Can Can.* Also anything by Alison Moyet or Gary Numan.

When you're listening to music now, do you prefer vinyl, CD or Spotify?
I sold all my records years ago, stupidly. And I had a massive collection because I used to do the weekly trip to Our Price and get all the latest singles, but now I do it through my phone with headphones. I've got a massive eclectic collection of music that I listen to. I love so many different types. I have a whole minimalist section that I love – Philip Glass and Michael Nyman, people like that.



"I just stood there like a goon" – James on meeting Elvis Costello

© Getty

SHAZNAY LEWIS

Q+A

20 YEARS ON FROM HER SOLO DEBUT, SHAZNAY LEWIS IS BACK WITH BELATED SOPHOMORE ALBUM *PAGES*. WE SPOKE TO HER ABOUT GOING IT ALONE AND WHETHER ALL SAINTS REALLY ARE NO MORE...

STEVE O'BRIEN

As the primary songwriter in All Saints, Shaznay Lewis was one of the defining artists of the late 90s. After the group split – for the first time – in 2001, the Islington-born singer-songwriter released her debut album, the No.22-charting *Open*, a kickstarter on a solo career that was soon to be paused when All Saints reunited in 2006. Now, six years on from the seemingly final All Saints record, Shaznay's back with *Pages*, a new 12-track album, boasting guest spots from, among others, Self-Esteem, Shola Ama and General Levy. "I do feel as though I'm starting again," Lewis explains, "and making this record with some special people has been an exhilarating experience."

It's been 20 years since *Open* and six years since the last All Saints album, *Testament*. So why now?
I don't really know. I never had any intention of doing my own project before. It literally all stemmed from one song I'd done. I'd done this session with Moyses Dos Santos and Charlie Stacey and by the end, I knew I loved the melody and really wanted to write something good to it. So I left it for a little while and then one day wrote a song over it, and that one track – *Missiles* – basically inspired me to go off and do my own project.

How would you describe the differences between *Open* and this latest solo album?
This record was definitely written without any sort of stress. If I think about how I felt when I wrote *Open*, I'd just come out of a band. Also, the label at the time had been taken over by EMI so I had no real point of contact in terms of A&R, as lots of people were leaving. I spent four years trying to put that record together. I just wanted to keep going, but there were so many other factors which just made that situation be quite drawn out. So by the end of the four years, when I finally did release *Open*, I was quite frazzled. And by that point I felt a little bit... unsure. But with this, with *Pages*, you're talking about 20 years later, so there's a lot of growth there, there's a lot of cemented understanding of what I do and how I do it.

How do you think you've matured as a songwriter in these past two decades?
It's about not trying to conform and implement things that, as a songwriter, shouldn't necessarily really matter. It was just about making sure I wrote a really good song, instead of thinking about anything else that sort of gets factored into being an artist.

You've worked with an impressive list of collaborators on the new album, some of whom started their careers, like you, in the 90s, and some who rose up more recently. Do you think that there's a different work ethic for people of your generation?
I'd say so, definitely. I think working with people like Jez Ashurst, anybody that's done production and writing from the 90s, we don't do auto-tune, we will sing it again and again until we get it right. And we're constantly looking for the better lyric or the better melody, as opposed to just kind of going, 'OK, I'm clocking off at 6pm, so this will do'. It's just an old-school way of working. When I go into a studio and I'm with people from my era, I feel instantly relaxed.

What kind of sounds did you want to bring to the new album and did you curate your listening to help inform the direction of the record?
From when I did *Missiles*, I knew how I wanted the whole record to sound. I knew I wanted it to be lush and for it to be smothered in strings and be quite soulful. If I came across certain tracks [on Spotify] that excited me, I made a playlist, which I called 'Inspirational Songs'. They were all quite different, but there was something or another in each of them that I liked and wanted to use.

You're playing your first ever solo show at London's Jazz Cafe on 14 May. Surely it's going to feel strange, not standing there with three other figures beside you?
That's the beauty of being in a band. Whenever somebody else was taking their turn to sing I would always look at everybody with so much pride and just have that moment to take it all in. So I'm gonna miss that definitely. But yeah, it's crazy that, in my whole career, I've never actually done this before. It makes me feel really good to know that, okay, I can say that I've done that. I did the BBC's *The Piano Room* a few weeks back, and that was my first real experience of performing on my own. In the rehearsals leading up to it, I had to learn very quickly to get into the mindset of understanding that there's a very different way of performing as a solo artist, as opposed to somebody in a group. There are all these different responsibilities. I feel like I've learned that from *The Piano Room* – it was in at the deep end, but a really good deep end. I absolutely loved doing that show and I'm really looking forward to playing The Jazz Cafe.

As well as her Jazz Cafe date, Shaznay Lewis takes *Pages* to the live stage on 2 June at London's pop-centric festival, the Mighty Hoopla

I HAD TO LEARN VERY QUICKLY THERE'S A VERY DIFFERENT WAY OF PERFORMING AS A SOLO ARTIST

Will you be doing any All Saints numbers on the night?
I'll do a few – maybe two or three? It's going to feel weird, because I'm doing them without the band, but I feel it's good because the ones that I'll be doing *are* classics, and they surpass being in a band, they're more than All Saints. Those songs can be revisited and reimagined in their own right. They can be sung because they're bigger than us.

What's the situation with All Saints now? Are you guys officially split up or simply on hiatus?
I've done the band thing for so long and a huge part of this journey has to do with writing. And when I say that, I mean I've been writing for 25 years for a band with that kind of hat on and being in that mindset. It's a very specific thing. Some of that specific thing is quite limiting because when you're writing for a girlband or boyband, it's a certain formula and a certain way of doing things. I just got to a point in my life and my career as a songwriter, where I just wanted to have different experiences. I wanted to be able to write for film or a TV series, or a musical or whatever. I know that being within the confines of a band, it just wouldn't allow my mind to go there. I had to remove myself from the situation so that I could allow myself to have these other experiences and be daring enough to have them. So it's not about hitting pause [on the band], it's simply just about taking another road.

Early in your career with the band you said you felt happiest at home writing songs and that, because the others had all been to drama school, you felt least comfortable performing. Do you feel more confident now, going out there solo?
I do. My mind just feels a lot more clear, I don't know why. I just feel more defined in my thinking. Before, I had a lot more, 'I don't knows' and 'can I do that?' I felt like I needed to stay in the confines of being in a band, because I felt that that was all I was allowed to do, or it was okay for me to do.

It was 20 years between *Open* and *Pages*. Presumably we're not going to have to wait until 2044 for album number three?
Who knows? [laughs]. At the moment I'm really in the middle of exploring different musical avenues. I'm just really excited about this album coming out. I love it so much, so I'm just excited to share it with people. ■

● ***Pages* is released on 17 May and reviewed on page 90. Shaznay plays The Jazz Cafe on 14 May.**

© Terry Blackburn / Sir Peter Blake

HEROIC EFFORT FOR CANCER CHARITY

Former Dire Straits frontman, Mark Knopfler, has been joined by more than 60 renowned artists on a reworked version of *Going Home (Theme From Local Hero)*, to raise funds for the Teenage Cancer Trust and its US equivalent, Teen Cancer America.

The track, performed by Mark Knopfler's Guitar Heroes, opens with Jeff Beck's final recording and includes appearances from David Gilmour, Ronnie Wood, Slash, Eric Clapton and Joan Armatrading. Also featured on the single are Bruce Springsteen, Pete Townshend, Nile Rodgers, Joan Jett, Brian May, Tony Iommi, Andy Taylor, Sam Fender and more.

Produced by Knopfler's long-time collaborator Guy Fletcher and featuring artwork designed by Sir Peter Blake, the extraordinary rhythm section has Ringo Starr on drums alongside his son Zak Starkey and Sting on bass, while Roger Daltrey adds harmonica.

"What I really want to do, more than anything else, is just to thank each and every one for this sterling response," says Knopfler, "I really had no idea that it was going to be like this. It hit Guy and I quite early on that we had to extend this piece somehow, to take in the number of people who joined in... I think what we've had is an embarrassment of riches, really. The whole thing was a high point."

Leading guitar manufacturers have donated eight instruments to be signed by the artists. Four of the eight have already been sold in the US for Teen Cancer America. The four remaining guitars will benefit Teenage Cancer Trust.

For further details, visit markknopfler.com.

CHESNEY MARKS NEW ALBUM WITH LIVE RETURN

Chesney Hawkes has unveiled a headline London gig ahead of the release of his new studio album. The LP, which is already in the can, was co-written with Jake Gosling (Ed Sheeran, Lady Gaga, One Direction) and long-time collaborator Nik Kershaw. To celebrate, Hawkes has just announced a headline London show at the O2 Forum in Kentish Town on 31 May. The show in the capital will also double up as Chesney's own pre-launch to Euro 2024 in Germany. Hawkes' new studio album is the long-awaited follow-up to 2012's *Real Life Love* and his career-spanning boxset *The Complete Picture: The Albums 1991-2012*. Tickets for the gig are available from chesneyhawkes.com.

LOST & FOUND

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER
CYNDI LAUPER

Cyndi Lauper chose to delve into the adult contemporary market with her third album and, although it follows all kinds of wild routes that don't always work, it's a pretty polished effort.

Hit single *I Drove All Night*, recorded after but released before Roy Orbison's version, heralds a light album that twice shamelessly lifts basslines, courtesy of the *Billie Jean*-dominated *Primitive* and the reworking of *Stand By Me*'s rhythm section on *My First Night Without You*. The latter's whispered verses and bombastic choruses could easily have provided the centrepiece of a Broadway musical.

Like A Cat, complete with purrs and euphemisms, revisits a previous penchant for innuendo and is, alongside the poignant *Heading West*, probably the most interesting song here. Two halves of campfire track *Kindred Spirit*, recorded through vinyl crackles, top and tail the album for reasons unknown, but it's intriguing.

On the ballad *Unconditional Love*, Lauper keeps her trademark haphazard vocals to an admirable minimum, but the tuneful screech returns in a welcome connection with Eric Clapton's guitar on the rocky, oddly-named *Insecurious*.

On the downside, the title track is bland and unmelodic, while *Dancing With A Stranger* is lightweight and complacent.

Despite mixed reviews, the album made the UK Top 10 – previous efforts *She's So Unusual* and *True Colors* didn't – and sold half a million copies in the United States. Lauper last released an album in 2016.

MATTHEW RUDD

MARC ALMOND
I'M NOT ANYONE TOUR
SEPTEMBER 2024
08 GRAND THEATRE LEEDS
09 THE LONDON COLISEUM LONDON
11 THE DOME BRIGHTON
14 THE BRIDGEWATER HALL MANCHESTER
15 THE GLASSHOUSE ICM 1 GATESHEAD
16 SYMPHONY HALL BIRMINGHAM
18 BRISTOL BEACON BRISTOL
21 USHER HALL EDINBURGH
22 FLORAL PAVILION THEATRE NEW BRIGHTON
PRE-ORDER ALBUM NOW
GIGSANDTOURS.COM
TICKETMASTER.CO.UK

Gabrielle
A Place In Your Heart Tour
Performing All The Hits Live
PLUS VERY SPECIAL GUEST
TUNDE
OF LIGHTHOUSE FAMILY
APRIL 2025
Wednesday 02 GLASGOW SEC ARMADILLO
Friday 04 NEWCASTLE O2 CITY HALL
Saturday 05 BIRMINGHAM RESORTS WORLD ARENA
Tuesday 08 HULL CONNEXIN LIVE
Wednesday 09 SHEFFIELD CITY HALL
Friday 11 CARDIFF UTILITA ARENA
Saturday 12 MANCHESTER AO ARENA
Tuesday 15 BRIGHTON CENTRE
Friday 18 LONDON THE O2
Saturday 19 BOURNEMOUTH INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
Gabrielle
NEW ALBUM
A PLACE IN YOUR HEART
OUT MAY 10TH
GIGSANDTOURS.COM | TICKETMASTER.CO.UK | GABRIELLE.CO.UK

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF HOPES AND FEARS
KEANE20
UK TOUR 2024
WITH SPECIAL GUESTS
THE LATHUMS
03 MAY SOLD OUT FIRST DIRECT ARENA LEEDS
04 MAY SOLD OUT UTILITA ARENA BIRMINGHAM
05 MAY SOLD OUT MANCHESTER CO-OP LIVE MANCHESTER
07 MAY SOLD OUT INTERNATIONAL CENTRE BOURNEMOUTH
08 MAY SOLD OUT UTILITA ARENA CARDIFF
10 MAY THE O2 LONDON
11 MAY THE O2 LONDON
FINAL TICKET RELEASES ON SALE NOW!
KEANEMUSIC.COM | GIGSANDTOURS.COM | TICKETMASTER.CO.UK

JAMIE CULLUM
November 2024
Mon 11 Manchester Bridgewater Hall
Tue 12 York Barbican
Wed 13 Birmingham Symphony Hall
Fri 15 Bristol Beacon
Sat 16 Swansea Arena
Mon 18 Ipswich Regent Theatre
Tue 19 Oxford New Theatre
Thu 21 Portsmouth Guildhall
Fri 22 London Royal Festival Hall (EFG London Jazz Festival)
Sun 24 Glasgow SEC Armadillo
Mon 25 Perth Concert Hall
Tue 26 Liverpool Philharmonic Hall
Thu 28 Nottingham Royal Concert Hall
Fri 29 Gateshead The Glasshouse
GIGSANDTOURS.COM
TICKETMASTER.CO.UK
JAMIECULLUM.COM
An SJM Concerts, Crosstown, DFC & Serious presentation by arrangement with CAA

Ian Peel's A to Z of POP

WHILE THE WORLD CAREERED TOWARDS THE BIGGEST NEW YEAR'S EVE IN HISTORY, AND PRE-MILLENNIUM TENSION TOOK HOLD, DID ANYONE NOTICE HOW 1999's POP MUSIC RAPIDLY UPPED ITS TEMPO?

N IS FOR... NINETEEN NINETY-NINE (BPM)

It's perhaps only with almost 25 years of hindsight that we can make sense of the strange tectonic plate shifts that took place in pop music at the end of the last century. As we were all busy worrying that planes would fall out of the sky, thanks to the millennium bug, and as every media outlet painstakingly reviewed the previous 100 years of news and culture, trance overlaid itself on the charts and pop went crazy, getting faster and faster and faster.

This phenomenon reached its absolute peak with the *Gouryella Remix* of Binary Finary's *1999*. Introduced by Gail Porter on *Top Of The Pops* when they went on an outside broadcast to the Revolution nightclub in Edinburgh, it's a brutal, relentless and uplifting electronic instrumental that reached the dizzy heights of 140 beats per minute and includes an epic synth breakdown that modern day Depeche Mode would be proud of.

It's almost unthinkable that a record as fast and frantic could even be a hit these days (Binary Finary made UK No.11 in August of 1999). But the very end of the last century was a strange period. Equally fast and furious were the likes of Delerium's epic *Silence* (May 1999, at 138bpm) and Energy 52's *Three N One Mix* of *Café Del Mar '98* (No.12 in July 1998 at 133bpm).

For a little context, a classic ballad like Phyllis Nelson's *Move Closer* is about 84bpm. A New Pop-era dance track like ABC's *The Look Of Love* ups the ante to 121bpm. But by 1999 we had things in the charts like System F's *Out Of The Blue* (No.14 in April 1999) at a staggering 140bpm.

But is this very 90s trance-boom classic pop worthy of *Classic Pop* magazine? Well to reference the three-pronged credo that's been printed on our front cover for the past 12 years, it's certainly "electronic" and "eclectic". As for "Eighties," you could argue that 80s pop was at the heart of 1999 trance, too. Fragma could not have reached UK No.11 with *Toca Me* (September 1999, at 135bpm) without the vibes of Chris Rea's *On The Beach* to draw on. ATB's *9pm (Till I Come)* (No.1 in July 1999, at 130bpm) could not have existed without the Europop of Falco and Peter Schilling that came before it.

> AS WE WERE ALL BUSY WORRYING THAT PLANES WOULD FALL OUT OF THE SKY THANKS TO THE MILLENNIUM BUG, TRANCE OVERLAID ITSELF ON THE CHARTS AND POP WENT CRAZY, GETTING FASTER AND FASTER AND FASTER

This energy injection breathed life into earlier pop music, too. William Orbit's *Pieces In A Modern Style* originally received a limited outing in May 1995 on his N-Gram Recordings label, before it resurfaced in 2000. Following the huge amount of publicity gained from producing Madonna's *Ray Of Light* album, the record reached No.2 on the UK Albums Chart and the frantic, up-tempo, Ferry Corsten mix of *Barber's Adagio For Strings* placed him at No.4 on the singles chart in December 1999.

And do readers remember the beautiful ambient vocal soundtrack to *Harry's Game*, a Yorkshire Television drama from 1982? It was performed by Clannad, of course, and they reached UK No.5 with *Theme From Harry's Game*.

Cut to 1999 – with everyone looking back as much as forwards and the beats per minute turned up to the max – Moya Brennan re-recorded her vocals to create the track *Saltwater* by Chicane (No.6 in June, at 131bpm). It has to be my favourite of this breathless moment in time. It's the track that crossed the streams and brought all elements of classic pop into focus. ■

The new album out 26 April
Deluxe formats include bonus EP
furthermore

petshopboys.co.uk | Parlophone

This month in POP

MAY 1980

DEXYS DEBUT AT NO.1 IN THE UK, MACCA'S QUIRKY SOLO RETURN, JOE STRUMMER ARRESTED – AND THE TRAGIC DEATH OF IAN CURTIS

STEVE O'BRIEN

Images © Getty

02 The South African government bans Pink Floyd's single *Another Brick In The Wall (Part 2)* after Black children adopt the song to protest against their inferior education.

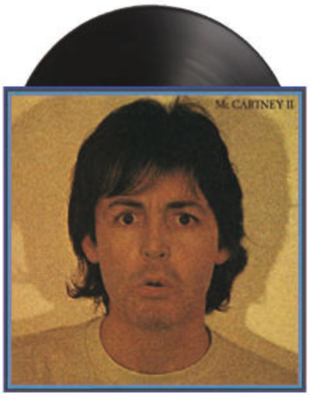
03 Bob Seger & The Silver Bullet Band begin a six-week run at No.1 on the US albums chart with 11th long-player *Against The Wind*.

03 Dexys Midnight Runners hit No.1 in the UK for the first time with *Geno*, a song written about US soul singer Geno Washington.

09 *I Don't Like Mondays* by The Boomtown Rats wins Best Pop Song and Outstanding British Lyric at the 25th Ivor Novello Awards.

16 The Human League release their second LP, *Travelogue*. It is the band's last album to include founding members Ian Craig Marsh and Martyn Ware.

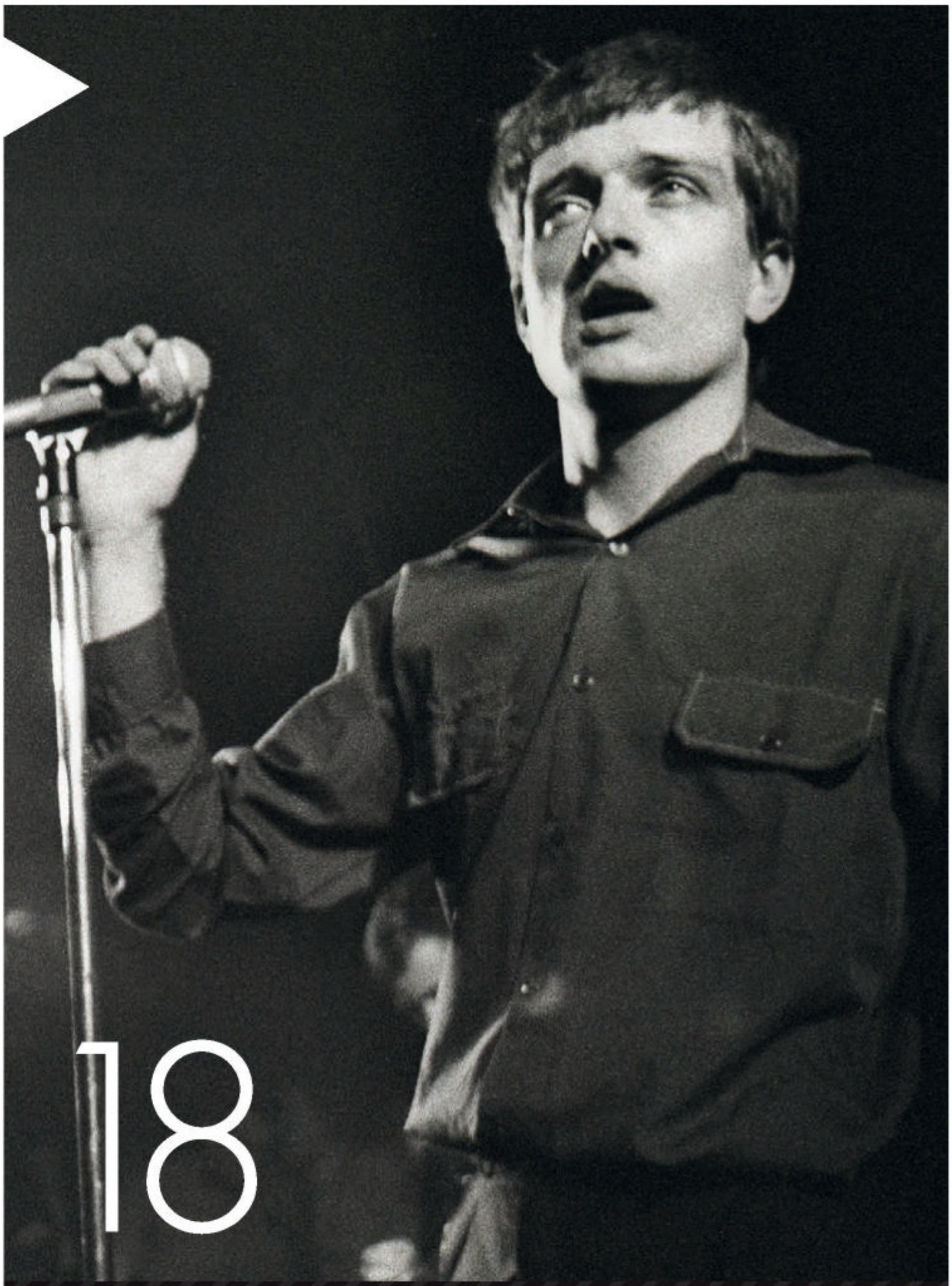
16 Paul McCartney releases the entirely self-recorded long-player *McCartney II*.



19 Ringo Starr and girlfriend Barbara Bach are involved in a car crash at a roundabout on the A3. Coincidentally, the accident occurs just half a mile from where Marc Bolan was killed three years previous.

21 The Clash's Joe Strummer is arrested in Hamburg, Germany, after smashing his guitar over the head of an audience member.

28 Westlife singer Mark Feehily is born in Sligo, Ireland.



18

Joy Division singer Ian Curtis was just 23 years of age when he hanged himself on 18 May 1980. His body was discovered by his wife Deborah after she returned from her parents to the couple's home at 77 Barton Street in Macclesfield. According to Factory Records boss Tony Wilson, the singer had spent his final hours watching Werner Herzog's 1977 film *Stroszek* and listening to Iggy Pop's 1977 album *The Idiot*. Curtis played his last gig with the band just 16 days before, at Birmingham University.

"I heard what happened when I got a call from a policeman," bassist Peter Hook recalled to *The Guardian* in 2011. "It was horrible. Mind-numbing shock, and it's very difficult to live with as a memory. I can remember it like it was yesterday."

Curtis' body was cremated at Macclesfield Crematorium just five days later on 23 May, and his ashes buried at Macclesfield Cemetery. A memorial stone, inscribed with 'Ian Curtis 18–5–80' and 'Love Will Tear Us Apart', was placed above his ashes.

In July 1980, *Love Will Tear Us Apart* would become the band's biggest hit, peaking at No.13 in the UK. Released on 18 July, Joy Division's second LP *Closer* would peak at No.6 on the UK Albums Chart, with music critic Charles Shaar Murray writing in the *NME*: "*Closer* is as magnificent a memorial as any post-Presley popular musician could have."

Joy Division's surviving band members – Peter Hook, plus guitarist Bernard Sumner and drummer Stephen Morris (alongside new recruit Gillian Gilbert) – would eventually regroup as New Order. As of 2024, Hook and New Order remain estranged, but both still pay tribute to their fallen bandmate, regularly playing Joy Division songs in their respective sets.

TOP 5 UK ALBUMS CHART

4 MAY 1980

1 **SKY 2**
SKY

2 **THE MAGIC OF BONEY M**
BONEY M

3 **GREATEST HITS**
ROSE ROYCE

4 **SUZI QUATRO GREATEST HITS**
SUZI QUATRO

5 **DUKE**
GENESIS

Spirit of the Blitz: Visage (L-R) DJ Rusty Egan, John McGeoch, Barry Adamson, Billy Currie, Dave Formula, Steve Strange and Midge Ure photographed in 1979

© Sheila Rock

"WE KNEW WE WERE ABOUT TO HAVE THE SPOTLIGHT THROWN ON US. BLITZ FELT LIKE A DUTY."

LONG SEEN AS THE CLUB THAT INVENTED BRITAIN'S CULTURAL LIFE IN THE 80s, BLITZ WAS THE EPICENTRE OF BOTH MUSIC AND FASHION. SO WHY WAS IT CREATED AT A DODGY WORLD WAR II-THEMED WINE BAR? BLITZ DJ RUSTY EGAN, BOY GEORGE, GARY KEMP, MIDGE URE, PHILIP SALLON AND SUE SCADDING DELVE INTO THE MADNESS OF THE ICONIC CLUB THAT SPAWNED THE NEW ROMANTIC MOVEMENT.

JOHN EARLS

THE

1980s were invented at the Blitz. Or so the popular image of one of Britain's most outrageous, certainly outré, clubs in our cultural history would suggest. The New Romantic movement definitely started with Rusty Egan and Steve Strange's hangout.

It's taken a startlingly long time to celebrate it, but Rusty is now showcasing the music that started a revolution on a boxset, *Rusty Egan Presents BLITZED!*. However, the eclectic mix of glam, European electronic art, Krautrock, goth and, yes, a few synth-pop bangers shows how wide-ranging the Visage drummer was behind the decks. It also proves just how short-lived Blitz was in blowing people's minds. By the start of 1981, Blitz was done.

Rusty's pleased to finally celebrate his legacy – and to hopefully shut people up about what he *didn't* play. An ebullient, hyperactive talker, he admits: "Every day, people come up to me saying: 'Hey Rusty, when are you doing a compilation?' It's a relief to get one out, after a lot of effort to get the rights. People who ask about a compilation then tell me: 'Why don't you put *Don't You Want Me* and *Tainted Love* on there?' Because they weren't released when the Blitz was happening! Blitz was 1979-80. This isn't *Now That's What I Call The Fucking 80s*, it's the real Blitz."

If Rusty is occasionally frustrated at the myths around what he helped create, Gary Kemp is delighted one of Spandau Ballet's biggest influences is finally being celebrated. "I wasn't a 'fan' of Rusty as a DJ when I was going to the Blitz," he considers. "It wasn't that kind of fan relationship, because everyone going to the Blitz felt like we were a team. Of course, in hindsight I now know Rusty was so important."

Iconic tunes: *Rusty Egan Presents BLITZED!* is the first definitive compilation of the music played at the club

Boy George was another admirer of what soundtracked his time working in Blitz's cloakroom, enthusing: "I always found nightclubs ridiculous, but I loved dancing. Credit to Rusty, he always had great taste. So many of those songs had me running to the dancefloor dressed as a nun, with my Boudicca helmet falling from my head. I was drunk and in love with everyone, but most in love with Fad Gadget – the unsung king of electronic music.

"I think growing up in the 70s, we all just loved everything – pop, glam, rock, reggae, electronic, even classical.

"If Steve and Rusty were coppers, Rusty would be the nice cop. Steve was often on a power trip and loved turning people away. He loved lording it on the door. He turned away Mick Jagger, which I was appalled by. Going to the Blitz was always exciting – a drunken backcombed bitch fest. Steve never turned Philip Sallon away, though. Ever. He wouldn't dare. Philip was the mother of all freaks. Still is really."

George's vivid portrait of his typical look for the Blitz highlights the club's other storied legacy. What Rusty Egan was doing for showing the future of music, Steve Strange was ushering in for fashion. Having fled his native Caerphilly to become a punk in London, Steve's extravagance and attitude were more suited to ensuring the future would be as colourful as possible. "Steve and Rusty couldn't be more different," accepts Kemp. "Yet together, they seemed to represent who the crowd in Blitz were: straight, gay, working-class, middle-class, outrageous, inventive. There was such a great mix under that roof."

Chosen few: Every Tuesday night the Blitz club's tiny dancefloor was rammed with the capital's elite trendsetters

© Peter Ashworth

A NEW MOVEMENT

Rejecting punk's uptight musical conservatism was inevitable, according to Midge Ure. He was coping with the fallout from his band Rich Kids, which featured Rusty on drums alongside guitarist Steve New and former Sex Pistol Glen Matlock on bass. Famously, the band split when Midge bought a Yamaha CS80 synthesizer. Rusty was delighted; Glen and Steve much less so. Punk, they insisted, was about guitars. "In 1979, a lot of what was happening was the dying dregs of punk," Midge explains. "The kids who went to Blitz had been through all that and wanted something new, something else. And the punks themselves were fed up. They wanted to move on, because once your younger brother starts to like something, you don't want to anymore."

That was certainly true of Philip Sallon. One of the original punk instigators as part of the scene's equivalent of New Romantic, the Bromley Contingent, whose number included Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood, the future club promoter could sense that something new was about to take its place. "Whatever's next is going to happen, and who wants to be there after the event? I'd rather be there before the event," Sallon laughs. "Punk wasn't 'Let's be the next scene,' but they were still verging on being fashion victims. What those movements were about was being ahead. The Bromley Contingent and Blitz Kids both wanted to be part of what was about to happen."

Towards the end of 1978, Strange and Egan started their first night at Billy's in Soho. It was an immediate success, but they quit after three months when the promoter doubled the price of the drinks. "Billy's owner told us: 'You're onto a goldmine here, lads,' but we told him that wasn't why we were there. It was about the music, never about becoming a business."

Steve's day job was at PX, a clothes shop whose outfits would become key to New Romantic. PX's owner, Helen Robinson, recommended he and Rusty instead try hosting a night at Blitz, a World War II-themed wine bar in nearby Covent Garden.

"Blitz was basically *'Allo 'Allo,'* chuckles Egan. "It was a hokey French-style place, down to candles in wine bottles. All it had going for it was you could smoke in there." Gary Kemp adds: "There were World War II posters everywhere. Did that represent Blitz Kids? Kind of, maybe, because it gave it a little bit of a setting for our dressing-up box. But Steve and Rusty only had it for one night a week, and that was Tuesdays, which, of course, isn't usually a great night for takings in a club. Then Rusty and Steve took it over and made it part of history. The other four nights a week, Blitz was just a regular wine bar." Gary's voice drips with disdain. "Really naff people probably went there then."

One of Billy's regulars, Sue Scadding, was coincidentally a barmaid at Blitz. She recalls: "Blitz's manager, Brendan Connolly, told me Steve and Rusty had asked if they could do a night at Blitz. Brendan asked me what their night at Billy's was like. I told him it was fantastic, and Brendan said: 'OK, let's do it, then.' Everyone was so young at Blitz. Brendan was only 24 himself, and even Mike Brown, the owner, was 26."

Egan had befriended Strange after being impressed by his eyeliner 'n' peroxide look, introducing himself to the Welshman after spotting him in the street. Steve eventually crashed on Rusty's sofa and hung out with Rich Kids on tour.

Before starting at Billy's, Steve also began taking Rusty to gay clubs. "They'd play sexy music by sexy people," says Rusty. "Soul music was sexy at that time, too: Chaka Khan, *Sexual Healing*. But next to that, I was listening to music I was buying when I went to Berlin and Düsseldorf. Kraftwerk were telling you what Platform 9 was like at Düsseldorf train station. They weren't trying to be sexy at all."

Nonetheless, Egan thought it would be relatively easy to make it all fit to soundtrack a glamorous night out, insisting: "I didn't think being a DJ would require much talent. You picked the right tunes, put them on at the right time and made sure you didn't drop a beat. I was a drummer, so how was I going to miss a beat?"

© Getty

I WAS DRUNK AND IN LOVE WITH EVERYONE, BUT MOST IN LOVE WITH FAD GADGET

BOY GEORGE

Drink to that: Pictured above, Blitz founder Steve Strange and club regular Princess Julia in February 1980

CLUB CURATION

Of course, Steve Strange wasn't going to let just anyone in to experience Rusty Egan soundtracking the future. "Steve was a great curator of people," notes Gary Kemp. "Every great club needs someone curating who gets in: the psychedelic scene at UFO club had Joe Boyd and Hoppy Hopkins, the glam club Middle Earth had Jeff Dexter. Blitz had to happen. We were the next generation after punk and we knew we were about to have the spotlight thrown on us. We had to show what we were about, what we were going to do. Blitz felt like a duty."

It was no coincidence that Blitz started in 1979, according to Kemp: "We felt a responsibility that we were going to define the youth culture of the 1980s. The fact that it was going to be 1980 soon, that was an impulse."

Despite being bored of punk, Midge Ure agrees with Philip Sallon that there were similarities. Midge points out: "Kids were rebelling against what a dark, dingy miserable time it was in the UK. The way we dressed at Blitz was as punk as picking up a guitar when you didn't know what to do with it. This was the punk ethos in a different direction: dress up, look overtly glamorous and listen to people hitting synthesizers with one finger. It was the same thought process as punk, just done with some glitter on it."

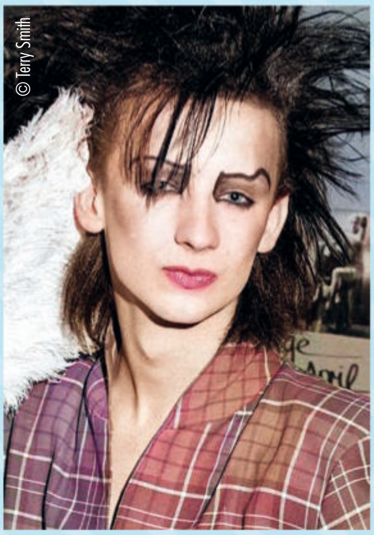
To get past Steve Strange, you had to make an effort. It helped in being able to dress up that Britain's most famous fashion college, St Martin's School Of Art, was a few minutes' walk from Blitz. John Galliano, Willie Brown, Melissa Caplan, Stephen Jones and Stephen Linard

COAT CHECK BOY

It's typical of the extraordinary folklore of the Blitz club that none other than Boy George worked at its cloakroom, though it's fair to say that he was far from a model employee. George explains: "Steve Strange gave me that job as a kind of put-down, but I loved being the first and last thing that people saw. I lost coats or gave them to the wrong people and I stole a few bob – I have been paid back for stealing!

"I often left my post to dance and got ticked off by Steve. The night Bowie came to the Blitz, I was beckoned upstairs by Steve – 'DB wants to meet you'. I couldn't get past the sea of people blocking the stairs up to where Bowie was seated. I also felt awkward and wanted my first meeting with Bowie to be a bit more.

"I went back to work and didn't make the grade for Bowie's *Ashes To Ashes* video. I was jealous when I saw Steve and Judith Franklin in the video – but I had robbed Judith's handbag so it was karma!"



© Terry Smith

Boy George often left his station at the Blitz's cloakroom to hit the dancefloor

Acclaimed music and fashion photographer Peter Ashworth captures Blitz club DJ Rusty Egan in Mayfair, 1979

© Peter Ashworth

"I WORE WHAT I COULD AFFORD: DEMOB OUTFITS AND SUITS FROM OXFAM

MIDGE URE

— are among the designers who were Blitz regulars. "The moment you can't get in somewhere, there's a mystique about it," notes Ure. "Some people could afford to shop at PX, but not many of us. I wore what I could afford: demob outfits and double-breasted suits from Oxfam. You had to be creative and inventive. It's actually what I wore in Ultravox, too."

"We were glam rockers who became punks and then took it further," according to Boy George. "We threw in a bit of goth for good measure. We loved *Cabaret* and John Waters' movies with Divine. We lived for the subculture and we were the subculture."

Even someone as dressed to impress as George wasn't always convinced he'd have Steve Strange's approval. "I was always at war on and off with Steve," he confesses. "Obviously, I loved Steve, but we were immature and fell out all the time, mostly about clothes and hairstyles, who did it first. Occasionally, it was over boys. So I wasn't completely sure if Steve would turn me away or not."

© Peter Ashworth

"The moment you can't get in somewhere, there's a mystique about it," – Blitz club regular Midge Ure

Of his first time at Blitz, George remembers: "It was good news I got in, because I turned it on visually that night. I wasn't dressed for being sent home."

Not everyone thought a door policy so strict that Mick Jagger famously got turned away was a good idea. Philip Sallon states: "Blitz had a VIP room, before virtually any club did. Steve was picking up on the right-wing inequality introduced once Mrs Thatcher came to power. Blitz was all about inequality. You had to be above everyone else to get in there but, once you were in, many people were still above you. Steve was great at picking up on those unequal vibes."

A SAFE HAVEN

However, Boy George believes Blitz was a haven for anyone with an alternative lifestyle, noting; "People were very relaxed about sexuality at Blitz, where being queer was a great calling card. Gays, especially the loud variety, were still a novelty in the 70s. Gay clubs were full of gay clones, wearing biker leathers and lumberjack shirts with jeans. Blitz was a refuge from judgement, both by conventional queens and casuals.

"I feel the Blitz carried on the work of every freak that ever walked the earth. Alternative people – not just queers and lesbians, but anyone who felt like an outsider. I know there has always been a subculture and we gravitated towards the underground. These days we celebrate and almost enforce diversity. Diversity comes with a ton of new labels. People are not interesting because of their sexuality but because of their character. Clothes can tell a different story to the world, but in the end we were all some mother's kid in make-up. When Bowie sang 'Oh you pretty things' we felt like he was pointing at us. Rusty is straight but he was a dandy back in the day. He turned out in full Biggles..."

In that maelstrom, any house band would need to look and sound spectacular. Enter Spandau Ballet. "Before I went to Billy's for the first time, I'd kind-of given up," admits Gary Kemp. "We were called The Gentry. We were playing mod, but wearing soul boy clothes. We fell between every stool and it really wasn't going to happen for us. Then, when I went to Billy's with our manager Steve Dagger, I realised: 'We need to buy a synthesizer.' We all chipped in to buy one and I rewrote everything, based on what I heard coming from Rusty's DJ booth. That music was the inspiration for Spandau's first album."

As well as soaking up the music, Spandau were enthralled by the licence to dress up. "Steve Strange was smitten with Spandau," smiles Rusty Egan. "They were fresh-faced, beautiful boys. Steve said: 'Give them whatever they want,' but I did the schoolteacher thing

on them, giving them a lecture: 'You don't need a drummer or guitarist. What guitar can you hear in what I'm playing? OK, there's Adrian Belew on David Bowie, but are any of you as good as Adrian? I doubt it.' I made them work for it, and introduced them to their producer, Richard James Burgess. They just needed a producer who knew what he was doing."

Spandau's first ever gig was at Blitz's Christmas party in 1979. "It was utter nerves," admits Gary. "We knew it was do or die. We couldn't believe it when people were looking at us, because at Blitz people were only interested in performing themselves, in how they danced. If they hadn't liked us, that was it. But they did – so that meant my brother was staying in the group."

Among the audience was Sue Scadding, who remembers: "It was obvious even at the time there was a lot of talent at Blitz. Spandau's first performance was amazing. It was a trial run before Steve Dagger would let them play anywhere else, and they were fantastic."

© Terry Smith

The late Blitz club founder and Visage frontman Steve Strange

RICH TAPESTRY

While Spandau were on *Top Of The Pops* within a year with *To Cut A Long Story Short*, Egan and Ure were plotting their next band to follow Rich Kids. "Rusty was always a driven, powerhouse of energy," says Midge. "When he wasn't banging drums at a million miles an hour, he'd talk at a million miles an hour. I'd listen to his mad ramblings, one of which was: 'Wouldn't it be great to get a band together to make the music we like, using all our favourite musicians?' And that was Visage. Out of Rusty's millions of outpourings, I jumped on that one." They still had demo time owed to them by EMI from Rich Kids, so the pair recorded a cover of Zager And Evans' *In The Year 2525* and a demo of future Visage favourite *The Dancer*. "We could have gone anywhere," reasons Ure. "We were on our own, with no template. We just had a synthesizer and a drumkit, but that was the nucleus of what we wanted. It was incredibly basic – one-finger keyboard stuff, a maximum of three fingers. But we made it work."

Their favourite musicians were soon recruited: John McGeoch, Barry Adamson, Dave Formula and Midge's new Ultravox bandmate Billy Currie. Having joined Ultravox, Midge didn't fancy fronting two bands. Why not

FUTURIST FISTICUFFS

© Getty

Spandau Ballet's Gary Kemp, witness to fighting futurists and brawling bishops at the Blitz

One of the most bizarre moments at Blitz happened as the club's clientele were beginning to fracture.

"Everyone wants a taste of being unique," explains Gary Kemp on Blitz's faultlines. "Once other people start to follow what you're doing, scenes change really fast. At Blitz, we were followed by the futurists, led by John McDonald."

The rivalry led to a full-blown fight, as Kemp laughs: "The futurists' club came down to Blitz to turn over the Blitz Kids. It was all going off right in front of me."

How much did Gary get stuck in to protect Blitz's honour? "Oh, I was nervous," he responds. "I stuck myself in the bar and gave that a swerve." According to the guitarist, entrepreneur Chris Sullivan "really got involved," as Kemp says: "I remember seeing one of the futurists getting trapped in a corner. He got the hell kicked out of him by someone dressed as a Scottish highlander and someone else dressed as a bishop."

Shortly after, other Blitz regulars decamped to the nearby Hell. "Hell felt like the beginnings of goth," says Gary. "Partly, that was because Hell's back door opened onto a cemetery, so people would drink and smoke on the cemetery. It was all black and crucifixes and people who stuck with Depeche."

ULTIMATE PLAYLIST

Alongside the official 4CD/4LP physical release of *Rusty Egan Presents BLITZED!*, the DJ is planning to upload an expanded version onto Spotify of all 253 songs that he played during the club's lifetime which are available on streaming.

He reveals: "There are some artists who won't license their music to compilations, like David Bowie. And I couldn't fit every song on, not even onto four CDs. There are probably about 50 playlists on Spotify that claim to be the music I played at Blitz, but none of them are real until now."

© Terry Smith

Rusty is also planning his autobiography – but admits it might be too spicy to be published. He grins: "I wrote 350 pages during Covid. Then my lawyer read it, and now it's 50 pages. I've got no filter, and the publishing world is nothing but filter. What I might do is read all the books other people have written about that time: Martin Kemp, John McGeoch, Derek Forbes, Dylan Jones. Then I'd just have to rewrite my version of what they've said."

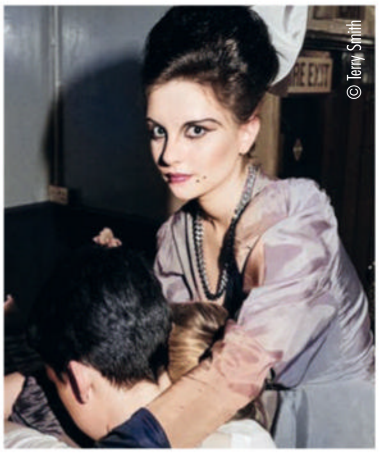
get Steve Strange in? "Steve wasn't a natural singer at all – but he was great at everything else," emphasises Midge. "The look was a major part of it all. He brought the bravado, the look and the great creators who were part of Blitz: the photographers, video-makers, designers. I'd sing the song to Steve, so he'd have my voice in his head while he followed the melodies."

While Visage were getting together, Rusty was enjoying blowing people's minds every Tuesday, behind Blitz's very primitive decks. "In those days, you couldn't change the tempo," he explains. "There was no fader, so you had to use your finger on the decks' grippy bit to fade a song out. Slipmats only came out later. Technically, it was a little difficult, but you'd get the general idea across."

Rusty was well aware of the symbiosis between music and fashion that he was introducing: "Blitz took you out of the grim and horrible Thatcherite Britain, with piles of shit on your doorstep. You had no future and nothing glamorous was happening? Forget that, I'm going to get dressed up, so I can forget about my crap on the dancefloor. And if I'm on the dancefloor looking fantastic, I don't want to hear *Boogie Oogie Oogie*."

Alongside Kraftwerk, La Düsseldorf, Nina Hagen and Gina X Performance from his trips to Germany, Rusty would play French chanson music, revealing: "I was an old romantic. I loved French films, Paris and film noir. The music in *Death In Venice* killed me. What was more interesting than feeling like you're in a club in Paris, listening to Space or Jean-Michel Jarre or Jacques Brel? We needed a bit of glamour."

Blitz club scenester: Princess Julia aka Julia Fodor



© Terry Smith

Teenage Blitz kids Jayne Sparke and Richard Wakefield flaunt their take on the club's infamously outrageous dress code

© Getty

VISITING ROYALTY

Eventually, Blitz was given the ultimate seal of approval when, in July 1980, David Bowie came to see what all the fuss was about.

"When David Bowie walked in, everyone was screaming 'Bowie! Bowie!,'" sighs Philip Sallon. "They were putting their hands in the air to try to get to him. I thought it was disgusting. The overriding message of Blitz was that it was about stardom. Idol worshipping is not my thing, because no one is better than anyone else."

Not *everyone* was so starstruck. "I snubbed him," grimaces Gary Kemp. "I'm as big a Bowie fan as anyone can be, but I was in a band and thinking: 'No, *we're* the next generation.' Everyone was so excited when Bowie came in, it annoyed me. He went upstairs, so I stayed downstairs, trying to ignore him – when in my heart, it was like the Pope had come in. Bowie arriving was the blessing that Blitz needed to confirm it was the place to be."

Bowie was also on the lookout for Blitz Kids to star in his *Ashes To Ashes* video. Steve Strange naturally appeared, helping Bowie to choose regulars Judith Franklin, Elise Brazier and Darla Jane Gilroy to star in the David Mallett-directed promo. They each earned £50 for helping Bowie to kickstart his 1980s.

While Boy George admits he didn't make the grade for the video from his own disappointing first meeting with Bowie, he was clearly destined for stardom with or without his hero. George's workmate Sue Scadding recalls: "George was always hilarious. He was outrageous. Working with him, I'd think: 'Oh no, now what?' You knew he was great, but I didn't think his

singing would be *that* good. How can you know that when you work with someone? When I first saw Culture Club live, I thought: 'I never knew you could do that.'"

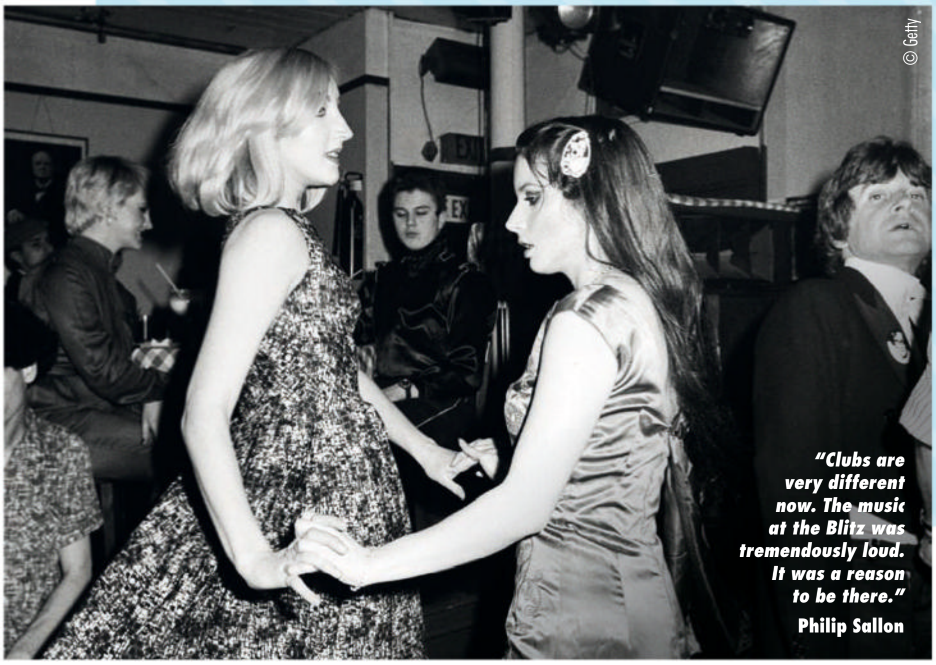
Bowie's blessing proved to be the ultimate Blitz moment. By the time the club closed in September 1981, most of its main faces had drifted away. Owner Mike Brown sold it to a restaurant owner who turned it into an American canteen.

By then, Sallon had opened the legendary Mud Club, Strange started goth joint Hell, Egan opened Camden Palace – where he put on the debut British gig by Madonna and the first London show by Frankie Goes To Hollywood. The club is still thriving now, as Koko.

"We realised when we were there that Blitz was something special," insists Gary Kemp. "When you left, there'd be cameras from Japanese film crews outside." Boy George has similar memories: "Some photographer or other was always taking pictures and we lived for the pose."

Blitz's impact was brought home to Sue Scadding when she bumped into Tony Hadley at a recent TV show. She laughs: "I was wearing John Galliano jeans. Tony gave them a tug and said: 'My God, not another Blitz person!' It was so funny – a lot came out of Blitz."

"Clubs are very different now," considers Philip Sallon, who remains

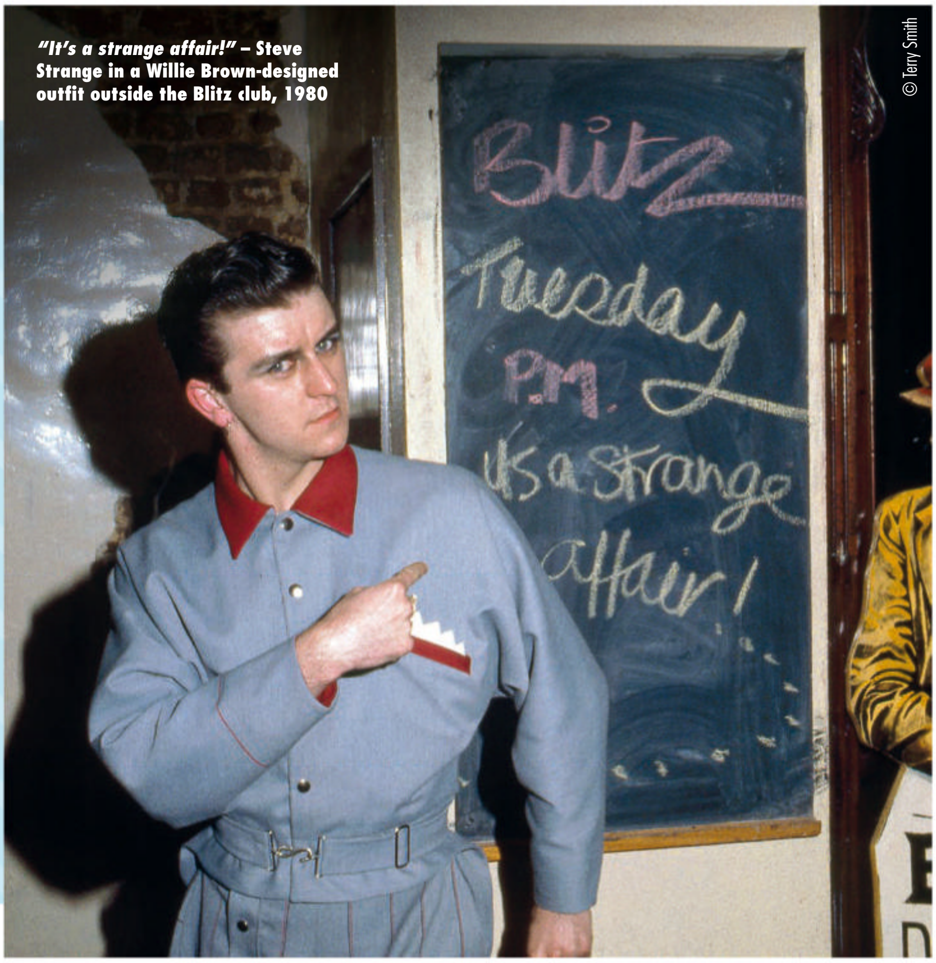


© Getty

"Clubs are very different now. The music at the Blitz was tremendously loud. It was a reason to be there."
Philip Sallon

BLITZ TOOK YOU OUT OF THE GRIM AND HORRIBLE THATCHERITE BRITAIN

RUSTY EGAN



***"It's a strange affair!"* – Steve Strange in a Willie Brown-designed outfit outside the Blitz club, 1980**

© Terry Smith

a tireless innovator in London nightlife. "The music at Blitz was tremendously loud. It was a reason to be there. Now, the music is a bit secondary. Clubs are much more about networking."

Even at a time when Midge Ure was in Ultravox, Visage and Thin Lizzy, Blitz matched them for excitement. "Going from the dying embers of Rich Kids to seeing everything explode within a year was so fortuitous," he accepts.

"For a while, I was riding on the crest of a wave, the guy helping to steer it behind the scenes. It's short-lived, but for that moment you think: 'OK, something is happening here.'"

As for the man who helped start it all? "I don't think Blitz invented the 80s," ponders Rusty Egan. "That was Margaret Thatcher. She was the one who created Del Boy with his Filofax. What I did was to put together a soundtrack, where everything fell into place."

He's overdue some mainstream recognition, is Rusty, still a force as a DJ and remixer. "I'm not as good a songwriter or performer as Midge," he counters. "Then again, there's often the other bloke: the other bloke in Soft Cell, the other bloke in Pet Shop Boys. Me? I'm the other bloke." ■

● ***Rusty Egan Presents BLITZED!*** **is released by Demon on 7 June and reviewed on page 94**

WHERE ITS PREDECESSOR IS GRITTIER AND MORE DYSTOPIAN, *TOUCH* IS LUSHER SONICALLY AND MORE PLAYFUL

1983's *Touch* was Eurythmics' first UK No.1 album and features three Top 10 singles

CLASSIC ALBUM

TOUCH
EURYTHMICS

ANNIE LENNOX AND DAVE STEWART'S THIRD ALBUM PROVED THEY WERE NO FLASH IN THE PAN. *TOUCH* WAS A RICH AND EXPANSIVE COLLECTION OF TRACKS, AT VARIOUS POINTS MAJESTIC OR DOWNRIGHT FUNKY, THAT HELPED TO CEMENT THEIR PLACE IN POP HISTORY.

FELIX ROWE

Early success can be the death of a burgeoning artist, suddenly thrust into the spotlight and then tasked with repeating the feat. No such worries for former flames, Annie Lennox and Dave Stewart. By the time they ascended to the summit of the Billboard Hot 100 at the start of 1983, the 'hot new act' were already industry old-timers. *Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)* was actually their fifth studio album together, including the three long-players in two years by New Wave hopefuls, The Tourists – and that's before we get on to Dave Stewart's two long-forgotten, early-70s records with the folk group, Longdancer.

So, when the time came to follow up the Eurythmics' breakthrough, it was not so much the 'difficult second album', but rather business as usual. *Touch* was the duo's third studio LP under their new moniker – their second within the same year, in what amounts to an extremely prolific run of productivity. The progression is equally impressive. Where its lo-fi predecessor is grittier and more dystopian, *Touch* is comparatively lusher sonically, bolder in production, and (at times) much funkier and more playful.

Unlike so many classic albums to grace these pages, *Touch* is not the tortured tale of protracted sessions, spent aching over each syllable. In fact, *Touch* was both recorded and mixed in just three weeks – a phenomenal work ethic that would put many of their contemporaries to shame.

Such a pace might be standard fare for a rough-and-ready garage band, essentially knocking out their live set on tape. But *Touch* is something else entirely: a precise, meticulously produced and multi-layered work; a shiny and ambitious pop effort, peppered with subtle flourishes that only reveal themselves over time.

Of course, the release was expedited to satiate the sudden huge demand for the duo who until recently had languished in relative obscurity. Certainly, the pair must have felt some pressure to deliver the goods. And fast. Speaking to *The Tube* in October 1983, Annie (ever the realist) acknowledged: "Well, we had a schedule to meet."

Meanwhile, in the same interview, Dave proffered a more optimistic take: "Well, I think it was better for us to make the album in such a fast way, because we'd come straight off the stage playing live, lots of concerts, and we captured that on the record. And I think a lot of people spend too long in the studio messing around, and this particular album has benefitted from it I think."

Indeed, *Touch* sounds fantastic by any standards, neither thrown together nor overly tinkered with. In reality, the two had by now found their form, with inspiration pouring out to shore up their position. While the standard of production is exemplary, it nonetheless wears its flaws outwardly. Throughout, capturing the raw energy and emotion is always afforded greater importance than achieving technical perfection, as a wavering vocal on the opening verse of *Who's That Girl?* demonstrates. It's refreshing to today's ears to hear a track that hasn't had its character sucked out of it through the ubiquitous pitch correction tools.

When it came to preparing for the album, Lennox and Stewart got a good head start, writing and demoing together on their drum machines and synths while on tour. Indeed, opener *Here Comes The Rain Again* was penned spontaneously on a rainy day, camped up in a New York hotel room overlooking Central Park.

By mid-1983, the duo had developed a distinctive and winning sound. Meanwhile, the resultant success gave them the confidence to both consolidate that sound and deviate from it. The ultimate offshoot is an album that's classic Eurythmics, though also eclectic and expansive.

TAKE ME TO CHURCH

The album was recorded in its entirety in the upstairs room of a former church in London's Crouch End. Shortly before release, Dave explained the set-up to *The Tube*: "It's really like a little warehouse, you know, so it's not like a proper recording studio, and it works better for us like that." He elaborated further on Swedish TV in the same year: "We wanted to get away from the industry, where it's a factory line, where the next group goes in the studio, then the next group goes in after, and it's just a sausage factory..."

At a time when the big studios still dominated the industry and home recording was unheard of, this was a bold move. This freedom created an environment in which they could work at their own pace, without the associated costs and inference and

© DPA Picture Alliance / Alamy Stock Photo

Touch was reissued in 2005 with bonus tracks including two live songs and a superb cover of David Bowie's *Fame*

© DPA Picture Alliance / Alamy Stock Photo

THE SONGS

1 HERE COMES THE RAIN AGAIN

A lyrical counterpoint to George Harrison's sunny optimism perhaps. The album opens much where things left off, with a minimalist arpeggiating synth invoking the club – but the orchestral arrangements from Michael Kamen add organic, human warmth. It possesses all the characteristics we've come to know and expect from a Eurythmics record: deep, soulful vocals from Annie Lennox, laced with yearning, plus shimmering electronic production from Dave Stewart, building into a killer chorus. Stewart has explained how part of the song's tension is derived from its key hovering between a minor then its parallel major, leaving an unresolved and undecided feeling. It reached No.8 in the UK, and No.4 in the US.

2 REGRETS

While the Eurythmics are one of those groups with their own clearly defined identity, *Regrets* has more than an echo of Grace Jones in her early 80s Compass Point period. With its minimalist slinky swagger, and skittish rhythms, it really could be a tribute to the Jamaican star, who was in her element in this period. In fact, the comparison has often been made between Jones and Lennox, both style icons of the 80s with a bold angular and androgynous aesthetic. An innovative slice of pop and early highlight of the record.

3 RIGHT BY YOUR SIDE

Again, that Compass Point flavour carries through, though in a more upbeat melodic sense. *Right By Your Side* has an overtly Caribbean vibe, with shuffling calypso grooves, skittish drum machines, slinky guitars from Dave Stewart, and even synthesized steel pans thrown in just to seal the deal. In fact, it's really setting the template for Vampire Weekend. Even down to the upbeat lyrics, it really couldn't be any further from the cold, mechanical desolation of *Sweet Dreams* released earlier that year. Annie even breaks into scat with pure jubilation. To a greater extent, it's an obvious outlier in its joyous, unbridled optimism, compared to the more restrained and cool nature largely adopted elsewhere. Indeed, this is the track that most polarises fans and critics, with several observers finding it just a little too jolly for its own good. But perhaps that was the whole point: a firm statement from the pair not to be pigeonholed as producers of cold mechanical laments. Some observers have suggested similarities in the opening drum groove to Tom Petty's *Don't Come Around Here No More*, co-written and produced by Stewart soon after.

4 COOL BLUE

More of a club banger, with a four-to-the-floor drum beat, repetitive groove and frantic beats. *Cool Blue* exhibits relatively minimal instrumental with a rather funky, rubbery fretless bass, popping, sliding and slapping over the place, subtly enhanced with cool, dub-style tape echo guitar stabs. There's a range of contemporary US influences on display, including more than a hint of the Minneapolis sound on the chorus, with perhaps a little bit of Chic thrown in there for good measure. Then, there's even a nod to rap in Annie's "How did you fall for a boy like that?" chanted refrain, that's playfully pitch-shifted out of shape. Annie moves from the simple drawn-out legato lines of the verse, into the huge and energetic chorus on the "How can I forget you, baby? Never gonna give you up." Dean Garcia delivers an extended bass outro, with a call-and-response going on with the synth pads, before Annie's return for the chorus coda.

5 WHO'S THAT GIRL?

Sung from the perspective of a jilted lover, it's a classic slow-builder, gathering momentum from subdued beginnings. It would become one of the duo's most recognised hits in their native UK (rising to No.3), while fairing slightly less well Stateside, just falling short of the Top 20. For this writer, this track will forever recall a brief sketch from Harry Enfield and Paul Whitehouse as market stall fish sellers trying to remember the words and melody to the main hook. (If that doesn't ring any bells, then Google it. But be warned, you'll never hear the song in the same light again.)

6 THE FIRST CUT

Picking up where *Cool Blue* left off, it's a repetitive club belter. Kick-starting on a slinky trebly guitar seemingly plugged straight into the mixing desk, plus a nagging synth riff that's extremely reminiscent of something else – somewhere between early Depeche Mode and The Cure's *The Walk*. It's an example of the pair let loose in their church studio, having fun with the overdubs. Cue lots of staccato chants, synth pops and electronic whooshes that punctuate the track. Again, Garcia's funky slap bass is a defining feature. It plays into Stewart's notion of benefitting from months on the stage – despite the electro flourishes, it has a live jamming quality to it, with lots of guitar to the fore, compared to some more reserved tracks.

7 AQUA

A repetitive skulking groove, like the soundtrack to an alley cat on the prowl at midnight. Here, a spacious arrangement leaves room for Annie's powerhouse soul vocal, heightened by cool counterpoint backing that appears to take influence from African traditional choral music. Staccato BVs, and great panning swooshing effects from Dave add further spice to the mix. Halfway through, the track adopts a palpable hypnotic quality, now taking on an Indian influence with a vaguely sitar-esque droning sound, before returning to a more syncopated funky groove. What it all means is unclear, with oblique and opaque lyrics. But what may sound like a stylistic mess on paper works wonderfully on the ear.

8 NO FEAR, NO HATE, NO PAIN (NO BROKEN HEARTS)

A stripped-back, minimalist track opening with an echoing drum machine loop and arpeggiated bassline, followed by a trademark soulful Annie wordless melodic intro (see notable examples on her solo debut, *Diva*, a decade later). It's a slow-builder with a dystopian synth-wave feel: very angular and arty, with lots of space between staccato synth hits, and dramatic live strings arranged by Kamen, that stab and lunge like Norman Bates in the shower. It's the perfect vehicle for Annie both as singer and theatrical performer. A *Pop Goes the Year* appearance from 1983 sees Annie rooted to the spot, delivering a huge performance, her facial expressions and hand gesticulations alone conveying the power and emotion of the track. A huge artistic endeavour that represents Eurythmics at their very best. Evidently too subtle and skulking to enjoy a single release, but it remains a stand-out album cut and fan favourite.

9 PAINT A RUMOUR

Now it's back to electro club banger mode, with a thumping programmed kick drum and 8-bit computer game synths. By design it's a repetitive backing track built on revolving grooves. As it develops, occasional brass licks enter the fray to present a more organic feel, before the release when it switches mood from the mechanical to a very organic slinky fretless slap bass, courtesy of Garcia. With its experimental groove, looping tension, and absence of a discernible chorus (simply Annie almost chanting over the groove), it feels very much like an album track – and seven minutes long at that. It's a chance to have a bit of fun in the studio and indulge their avant-garde side, though this writer will argue that no pop song has the right to outstay its welcome for seven whole minutes – not even *Bohemian Rhapsody* dares to do that. Still, it keeps one foot clearly in the club.

© Getty

Dave Stewart on set during filming of the *Here Comes The Rain Again* video in Orkney, Scotland

THE PLAYERS

ANNIE LENNOX
The soulful diva with the huge voice met her future ex Stewart while studying at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

DAVE STEWART
The boy from Sunderland, whose 70s folk band were signed to Elton John's label, without success. Then came The Catch and The Tourists, before finally hitting it big-time with his former beau.

DICK CUTHELL
A true industry heavyweight, Liverpool-born Cuthell appeared on Bob Marley's *Exodus*, before joining Rico Rodriguez in The Specials, then Fun Boy Three. He also performed with The Pogues and Madness. On *Touch*, he contributes the trumpet, flugelhorn and cornet.

DEAN GARCIA
Later known for the group Curve, with Toni Halliday, Garcia played bass in Eurythmics' live band, also performing on *Be Yourself Tonight*.

MICHAEL KAMEN
The American classical composer and arranger provided orchestral flourishes, beautifully enhancing and contrasting the electro stylings. Elsewhere, Kamen added drama to Kate Bush's *The Sensual World*, Queen's symphonic *Who Wants To Live Forever* and Bryan Adams' perennial *(Everything I Do) I Do It For You*. Annie Lennox dedicated her 2004 Oscar to her "darling friend" Kamen following his death just a few months earlier.

MARTIN DOBSON
A career session player, Dobson plays baritone sax on *Right By Your Side*, having performed on records or on stage with the likes of Cliff Richard, Toyah, Jimmy Somerville, Siouxsie And The Banshees Boomtown Rats, Frankie Valli And The Four Seasons and The Supremes.

with fantastic results. Under their tutelage, 'The Church' would grow from these humble beginnings to become an esteemed studio, later owned by David Gray and now producer Paul Epworth, welcoming everyone from Bob Dylan to Madonna.

Touch saw the pair expand their musical palette, opting for a greater balance of acoustic and stringed instruments. Amazingly, even the string section from the British Philharmonic Orchestra was captured in their relatively cosy studio space. Apparently, (to quote rockandrollglobe.com) this entailed "cello players… positioned in the bathroom with violinists in the hall and arranger Michael Kamen conducting from a spiral staircase."

The calibre of guest musicians on the album is second to none. Sid Sax (who, in fact, played the violin) is called out "with special thanks" in the liner notes. A favourite of George Martin, pop trivia nuts won't need reminding that Sax's previous session credits included Beatles standards, *Yesterday* and *Eleanor Rigby*.

The resulting work is sophisticated, well-crafted and – at times – majestic, most notably on *Here Comes The Rain Again* and the fantastic *No Fear, No Hate, No Pain (No Broken Hearts)*. Often, it dips a toe in the avant-garde, but throughout it remains fundamentally a pop album, and an extremely accessible one at that. Even at their more outlandish or dramatic moments, Annie and Dave manage to pull it off without ever sounding pompous or worthy.

Across the album's 45 minutes, Annie conveys opposing emotions – sometimes aloof and guarded, at other times, raw release. The jaded lyrical themes of their previous record continue: mistrust, jealousy, guarded rage, yet the warmer orchestration injects welcome rays of light among the darkness. In *Right By Your Side*, however, it's just pure light, beamed straight in from the Caribbean on a wave of steel pans.

With the synth honeymoon perhaps beginning to wear off, Stewart is content to dust off his old guitar again, and he wields it with intent in the live performances of this era. Nevertheless, he plays his guitar hero ambitions very lightly on *Touch*. Of course, a more muscular guitar sound (with long hair to match) would follow in the late 80s. But for now, Dave's happy to simply let his subtle embellishments serve the song, whether that's slinky Chic-esque licks or dub-style flourishes.

© Getty

Annie Lennox in the same promo video, that helped the duo secure their second Billboard Top 10 hit

WHO'S THAT GIRL?

The album possessed that ultimate hallmark of quality, prized by every self-respecting artist of the 80s: a Peter Ashworth cover photo. The photographer is renowned for immortalising icons in that wonderful 12" square format (as he did for other luminaries of the era: Adam And The Ants, Visage and Frankie Goes To Hollywood.

But *Touch* is one of Ashworth's finest: Annie adorns her classic tangerine buzzcut and leather Lone Ranger mask, like the ultimate superhero she is, flexing her muscles in a pose reminiscent of J. Howard Miller's 1943 promotional poster, 'We Can Do It!'

'Rosie the Riveter', an iconic symbol of feminism in the United States, inspired the LP's cover shot

That original poster was designed to inspire the largely female factory workforce (so-called 'Rosie the Riveter') during World War II. The similarity is not incidental – the image was often re-appropriated as a symbol of feminism in the 1980s. The cultural importance of Annie's own iteration is assured by its inclusion in the National Portrait Gallery's permanent collection.

While Lennox is forever the icon, *Touch* represents a significant personal achievement for Dave Stewart, too, being his first record credited as the sole producer. This milestone would prove instrumental in launching his parallel career as producer for the heavyweight stars, which has included a Beatle, a Stone and a Heartbreaker.

Like Yazoo and Pet Shop Boys, Eurythmics had helped to create the British synth-pop duo archetype – strong silent type at the back, twiddling the knobs; theatrical frontperson commanding the audience.

While they actively nurtured that aesthetic on the *Sweet Dreams* album, *Touch* marks a conscious move away from it, evident in the newly expanded live band (complete with a trio of matching backing singers dubbed 'The Croquettes'), who are pointedly showcased throughout promotional appearances.

The only discernible fly in the ointment in its immediate aftermath was the release of 1984's *Touch Dance* – a hotch-potch of dance remixes, hastily assembled and released without the duo's input, and much to their chagrin. There was no disguising the cynical label cash-in on this occasion.

Yet with *Touch* recently celebrating its 40th birthday, it remains totally fresh and relevant as it ever was. As a collective body of work, it's a record that cements Eurythmics' place in pop history. It was their first, but not last, No.1 album. While it essentially retained and perfected the synth-pop sound, it precipitated further sonic departures on subsequent LPs.

Touch made it onto *Rolling Stone* magazine's '500 Greatest Albums of All Time' list in 2003, and again in 2012, among other vaunted picks of essential listening, and rightly so. Though not without flaws, it's a touch of class.

THE VIDEOS

HERE COMES THE RAIN AGAIN

What is it with this fascination among *Classic Pop* favourites for belting out anthems while taking a stroll on the edge of a windswept cliff? It highlights a flagrant disregard for their own safety and the coastguard's stretched resources. Perhaps Eurythmics kickstarted the trend, later aped a zillion times from Tears For Fears' *Shout* to The Cure's *Just Like Heaven*. The duo's atmospheric archetype was filmed on Orkney, featuring the towering sea stack of the Old Man of Hoy. Elsewhere, the video adopts a slightly sinister voyeuristic concept, with Dave's character stalking Annie with a film camera.

RIGHT BY YOUR SIDE

This standard performance video shouts: "Look, we're not a duo, we're a band!" complete with all the decade's classic stylings (a Russell electronic drum kit and a LinnDrum, obviously). In a curious sartorial choice for the socially conscious vegetarian, Lennox seems to have stolen her outfit from Cruella de Vil: a trouser suit with leopard print hat, gloves, earrings, complete with a full leopard skin sash. Let's hope it's faux. That aside, it's an uplifting promo, as befitting the track itself. Even the usually cool and stony-faced Dave Stewart (wearing what could almost be described as a cape) can't help but boogie with a huge grin on his face.

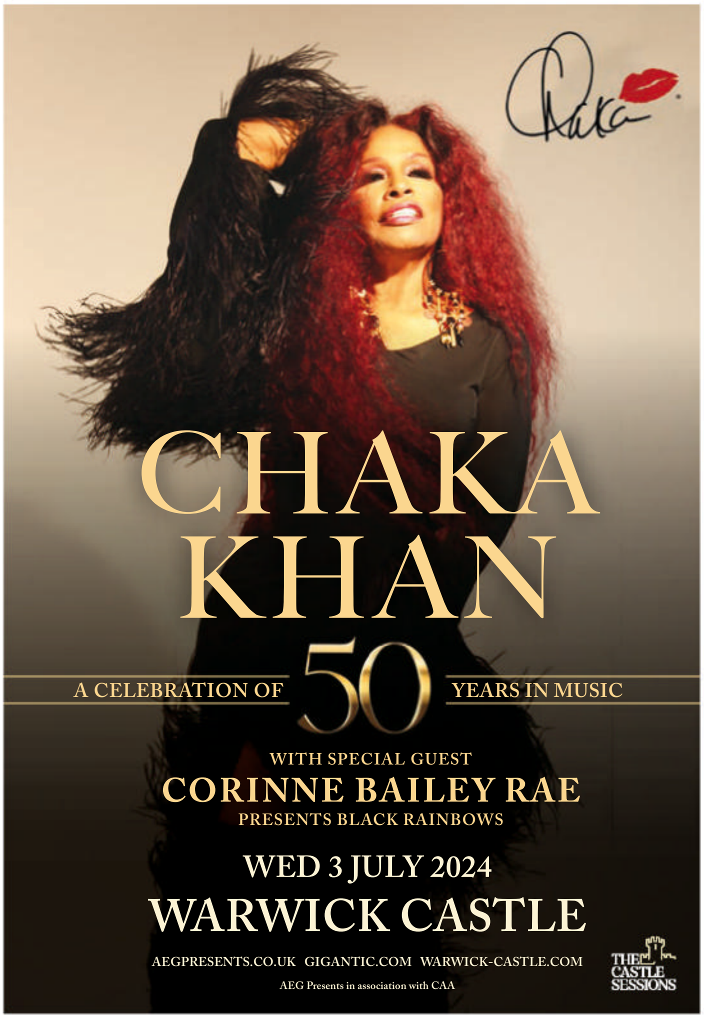
WHO'S THAT GIRL?

Set in a cabaret style bar, Annie is reimagined as a sultry blonde singer, dolled up in a shoulder-length 60s wig. Dave meanwhile is the womaniser, surrounded by a string of admirers. Once again they toy with gender play, as Annie appears in a second role: a suited man, vaguely resembling Elvis, complete with five o'clock shadow. The magical twist occurs when both Annie's characters join together for a kiss (or the best approximation with the available FX of the time). To cap off the spectacle, a fun game can be enjoyed spotting all the pop cameos as Stewart's love interests. Top marks if you can find *Classic Pop* stalwarts Bananarama, Bucks Fizz, Marilyn, and Kiki Dee.

Annie Lennox sports her iconic Lone Ranger mask and copper buzzcut in Munich, April 1983

© DPA Picture Alliance / Alamy Stock Photo

ROCK & ROLL HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES
Heart
ROYAL FLUSH TOUR 2024
WITH SPECIAL GUEST
Squeeze
JULY 2024
MON 01
LONDON
THE O2
WED 03
BIRMINGHAM
UTILITA ARENA
FRI 05
NOTTINGHAM
MOTORPOINT ARENA
SAT 06
MANCHESTER
AO ARENA
MON 08
LEEDS
FIRST DIRECT ARENA
TUE 09
GLASGOW
OVO HYDRO
HEART-MUSIC.COM
AEGPRESENTS.CO.UK
AEG PRESENTS



CHAKA
KHAN
A CELEBRATION OF 50 YEARS IN MUSIC
WITH SPECIAL GUEST
CORINNE BAILEY RAE
PRESENTS BLACK RAINBOWS
WED 3 JULY 2024
WARWICK CASTLE
AEGPRESENTS.CO.UK GIGANTIC.COM WARWICK-CASTLE.COM
AEG Presents in association with CAA
THE CASTLE SESSIONS

DREAMWORLD
PET SHOP BOYS THE GREATEST HITS LIVE
JUNE 2024
04 OVO HYDRO, GLASGOW
06 MOTORPOINT ARENA, NOTTINGHAM
08 UTILITA ARENA, BIRMINGHAM
09 CO-OP LIVE, MANCHESTER
11 SSE ARENA, BELFAST
★★★★★
THE TIMES
THE GUARDIAN
DAILY TELEGRAPH
METRO
NME
PETSHOPBOYS.CO.UK
AEGPRESENTS.CO.UK
AXS.COM
TICKETMASTER.CO.UK
AEG PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH PRIMARY TALENT INTERNATIONAL

Inspired by a stone staircase, new Crowded Houses LP *Gravity Stairs* is "a metaphor for getting a little older and becoming aware of your own mortality, your own physicality," says Neil Finn

DEFYING GRAVITY

CROWDED HOUSE'S NEW ALBUM, *GRAVITY STAIRS*, IS A LATE-CAREER TRIUMPH. BUT MAKING MUSIC SOUND SO EFFORTLESS REQUIRES AN INCREASING AMOUNT OF EFFORT NEIL FINN AND NICK SEYMOUR TELL *CLASSIC POP*.

PAUL KIRKLEY

Approaching five decades into a career as one of the world's most successful and respected singer-songwriters, you might think Neil Finn would have this whole business of making music figured out by now. But no: 47 years after joining his brother Tim in New Wave art rockers Split Enz, and 39 since forming his own band, the Crowded House frontman is no closer to unravelling the cosmic mysteries of the song. Don't imagine for a second, though, that he's going to stop trying.

"As life goes on, it gets harder to feel the moments of inspiration are worth it – especially when physicality becomes more difficult," reflects the laidback New Zealander when *Classic Pop* meets him and fellow Crowded House founder, Australian bassist Nick Seymour, at their record label's London HQ. "It's understandable that some people want to retreat and get their hands in the soil and be a gardener in their advancing years. But for some reason, I feel more compelled than ever to chase that elusive mystery that is music making."

It's this quest that informs the title (and much of the attitude) of Crowded House's new album – only the eighth of their stop-start career – *Gravity Stairs*. Though initially inspired by an *actual* stone staircase leading up to the Finns' holiday home in Greece ("I've lugged bags up there many times," he recalls), it's the metaphysical ascent that is Neil's real concern.

"The first song on the album [*Magic Piano*], refers to 'the bells ringing in the temple above'," he explains. "That's about waiting on the promise of a great new magic tune to appear. But being aware that you actually have to climb these stairs to get to it."

This is not a new theme in Finn's work: a decade ago, he released a solo album called *Dizzy Heights*, during which he spoke about being "addicted to trying to climb the mountain", citing his esteemed countryman Sir Edmund Hillary as a possible inspiration.

"It does seem to be a comparatively consistent thread," he says. "I work pretty obsessively over stuff, and Nick will probably vouch for the fact that it's not uncommon for me to take something which we've worked really hard on, and has turned out really well, and go, 'I'm going to take it apart and reassemble it again'."

GOING THE DISTANCE

Nick, an equally youthful 65, nods his agreement. "I think, in the band, we all have a fundamental understanding of the integrity of the work process – so if Neil makes a decision to change something that shifts from that integrity, we will mention it. And he'll take it on board. Which is great. We all respect each other's ability to make a call on these things.

"Neil's songs are more like working drawings when he brings them to the band," he adds. "Then we have a very short window of a few days here and there in the studio. It can be incredibly stressful to just believe in yourself in those moments. That's when the imposter syndrome kicks in. And then there are those moments, where you just suddenly break through the threshold..."

Today, the job of making a Crowded House album is complicated by the fact its members are scattered across four different countries: Finn is in New Zealand, Seymour lives in Ireland, keyboardist Mitchell Froom and Neil's guitarist son Liam live in Los Angeles, while his other son, drummer Elroy, is in London. "We're trying to be as far away from each other as possible, and we're doing it very well," laughs Finn. "But it does elongate the process. To the point where I said: if we do

The sleeve artwork for the new album was provided by bassist Nick Seymour

(L-R) The late Paul Hester, Nick Seymour and Neil Finn in 1988, the year of second album *Temple Of Low Men*

© Getty

INTERPRETING DREAMS

Arguably Crowded House's signature song, *Don't Dream It's Over* has been performed by artists ranging from Paul Young (whose cover version made it into the UK Top 20 back in 1991) to U2 (who have recently repurposed it as a tribute anthem to the late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny), Miley Cyrus and Ariana Grande – and even Fleetwood Mac, who made it part of their set while Neil Finn was in the band. ("Songs like that only come along once in a lifetime," Stevie Nicks told the crowd.)

"U2 did actually give it their own flavour," says Nick Seymour. "We were dying for Bono to give it the full Bono, which he doesn't quite. But I love watching The Edge trying to get the swagger on the guitar, during the Maori strum part."

In Italy, meanwhile, singer-songwriter Antonello Venditti took the tune as the basis for his hit *Alta Marea (High Tide*). "Everyone in Italy knows that song, but they don't know our version of it," says Neil. "It sort of inadvertently wrecked our career over there, and now we don't get to play those lovely Colosseums and stuff.

"The lyrics are nothing to do with my lyrics whatsoever," explains Finn. "There's something about 'we smoked a cigarette and then we made love...'

"The video features a 16-year-old Angelina Jolie – I think it's her first appearance on screen – playing a schoolgirl. It's all very... inappropriate."

another record, we have to commit to being in the same place for six weeks continuously."

"The most frustrating issue is that we're at exact opposite ends of the clock," says Nick. "So, when Neil's waking up, I'm about to go to bed. I've had a couple of drinks, or am just really tired, and he's just having his morning coffee."

However imperfect the process, and however tricky the climb, Crowded House have emerged at the end of it with an album that stands among the best of their celebrated career. From the opening strains of the gorgeous *Magic Piano* to the dying embers of the jazzy, playfully experimental *Night Song*, its 11 tracks deliver the lush harmonies and deceptively effortless melodies that have helped the band shift more than 15 million records around the world, without ever sounding like they're treading water or going through the motions.

Is it, wonders *CP*, time to retire that old saw about pop stars doing all their best work in their early years, and acknowledge that, *of course* you're going to write some of your finest songs when you've actually lived a life? When you actually *know stuff*?

"A late flourish?" says Finn. "I don't think it's universally true, because some people just lose the desire early on, and fame destroys the soul that some people have for it. And almost all the people who end up having a late flourish go through a mid-career slump in notice and attention. But for the people who do make it through, there's this feeling that they're given another moment of regard by people. I'm banking on that," he laughs.

As for those "effortless" melodies (which, of course, are anything but), there's an illuminating insight into Neil's working method on *Magic Piano*, in which he sings, 'Words matter but they get in the way, when you've got some stories to tell/ Let the melody reign...'

"I grew up revelling in melodies – way before I got interested in lyrics," he explains. "For me, the battle of being a songwriter is making words that don't ruin the melody. I'm not a natural lyricist," he adds, self-effacingly. "I didn't start off writing poems. So 'let the melody reign' is sort of my manifesto."

> "For me, the battle of being a songwriter is making words that don't ruin the melody. So 'let the melody reign' is sort of my manifesto."
>
> NEIL FINN

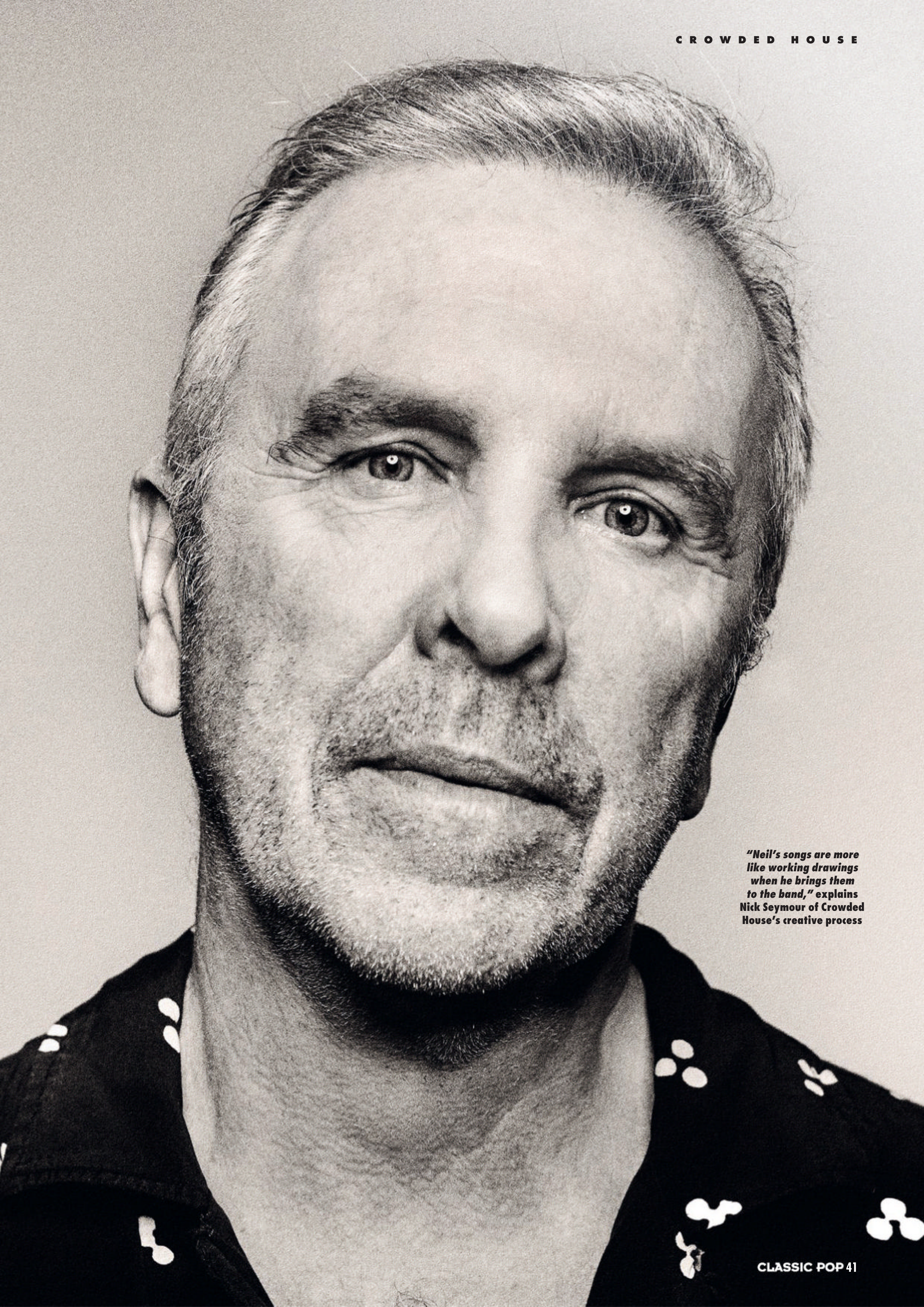
REACHING BEYOND WORDS

For the generation who got their musical awakening through punk, and would go on to dominate the rock press for decades, melody was often viewed as a dirty word. But Crowded House never worried about being fashionable. "I'm far more attached to the idea that the melody itself tells a story and has a transformative ability to get people through difficult times, or whatever," says Finn. "To reach out beyond what words can do."

And reach out they surely have: for Crowded House fans of a certain vintage, honeyed classics like *Don't Dream It's Over* (their biggest international hit, reaching No.2 on the US Billboard chart in 1987) *Fall At Your Feet*, *Distant Sun* and *Weather With You* (a Top 10 hit in the UK in 1992) aren't just songs: they're the soundtrack to their entire lives.

"It's a huge gift that keeps on giving – that idea of being able to offer comfort and inspiration and joy to people throughout a whole lifetime," reflects Neil. "To have people writing letters to you when they're going through tough times... I would never take that for granted. It's a very beautiful exchange, and I feel blessed to have it. Sometimes the strangest things become important for different reasons – the same song will get played at a funeral and a wedding."

Alongside Finn, Seymour – a talented artist who provides most of the band's artwork, including the *Revolver*-inspired *Gravity Stairs* cover – is the only surviving member of the Crowded House class of



"Neil's songs are more like working drawings when he brings them to the band," explains Nick Seymour of Crowded House's creative process

HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIP

Other themes explored across *Gravity Stairs* include the importance of human connection – Neil began *Life's Imitation* during the isolation of lockdown, but it also speaks to the itinerant life of a touring musician – while the sunny lead single *Oh Hi* was inspired by the children he's met during his involvement with So They Can, an international non-profit charity that builds schools in remote parts of Kenya and Tanzania. *Some Greater Plan (For Claire)*, meanwhile, takes its inspiration from Neil's father's wartime diaries, in which he chronicled a whirlwind romance with a diplomat's daughter in Florence. Appropriately, the songs also feature guest harmonies from occasional Crowded House contributor Tim Finn (pictured above).

'85. But the current line-up has roots that stretch deep into the band's past: Californian producer Mitchell Froom helmed their first three albums and 1996's *Recurring Dream*, before finally being persuaded to join the gang in 2019. Elroy Finn, meanwhile, learned at the drum stool of Paul Hester, the former Split Enz sticksman turned Crowded House co-founder, who took his own life in 2005.

"Paul taught Elroy how to play the brushes on the snare drum, which was one of his signature things," recalls Neil. "When we first decided to come back in 2006, we tried out about 30 great drummers, but none of them could play the brushes in the manner Paul could. Elroy – who was still at school at the time – ended up showing a few of them how to do it on *Four Seasons In One Day*."

It was Hester's death that prompted that first Crowded House reunion – a decade after they'd called it a day with their legendary farewell concert, playing to 150,000 people on the steps of Sydney Opera House. "That was a big part of what led Nick and I to reconnect," says Finn. "We were completely blown out of the water by what happened, and it was important to be able to share it. So, we started making music together again, and reached a point where we thought maybe we should put some good experience into the idea of Crowded House again, rather than leave it as this big, yawning absence. And in a way, that whole [reunion] tour became both a bit of a ritual for acknowledging what had happened [to Paul], and moving on a little bit from it. Not that I'll ever really accept what happened. But it helped."

In 2018, during another Crowded House hiatus, Neil – who's also made four solo studio albums, a further two with his brother Tim, and *Lightsleeper* with Liam – stepped in to help out a little-known band called Fleetwood Mac, after Lindsey Buckingham's sudden departure. While Mick Fleetwood has lamented that the "soap opera" of the Mac has sometimes been in danger of overshadowing the music, Crowded House appear to have been *relatively* bust-up-free over the decades. Or are they just better at keeping a lid on it?

"I've always thought the ultimate prize would be to have one of your songs sung in 200 years' time, and nobody has any idea where it came from"

NEIL FINN

"Well, they set the bar for interpersonal drama," smiles Finn. "I mean, there have been moments in this band – Paul left in the middle of a tour once. But I think the level of success we've enjoyed... even though there have been some great peaks, we didn't enter the world of extreme celebrity, where people are picking over every detail of your personal life." (Though people in Australia and New Zealand, where their superstar status is reflected in a haul of 13 ARIA awards, may disagree.) "That's been the undoing of many a good talent. We saw it with Michael Hutchence, who we knew – and Nick knew particularly well. He was just a sweet-natured guy who got incredibly famous, and just ended up on this sad trajectory he couldn't get away from."

Whereas with Crowded House, the legacy is, pure and simply, the songs. We all want to leave our footprint on the world, suggests *Classic Pop*: it must be incredible to think that the songs will still be there, even when you're long gone?

"It's a comforting idea," nods Neil. "There's a cosmic insignificance that we all have to confront, in that in a hundred years' time, there might be a photo of us on a wall somewhere, if we're lucky. But a song can exist as its own entity, it's something with a life. I've always thought the ultimate prize would be to have one of your songs sung in 200 years' time, and nobody has any idea where it came from. It's like a folk song, and the melody just lives on."

"I noticed that when I moved to Ireland," says Nick. "How those melodies could live. I remember being in a pub in Lahinch, and there was a guy in the window, singing *Four Seasons In One Day*. And I got a bit self-conscious about it, so I went to the bathroom, and there's a guy having a wee next to me who's also singing it. I said to him, 'What's that you're singing there?' And he said, 'Ah, 'tis just an air'..."

Next year will mark 40 years of Crowded House ("I can't believe we're still getting away with it," laughs Seymour). And while the world arguably feels like a darker place than it did, even at the height of the Cold War, Finn's belief in the power of music remains undimmed. "If you've got kids and grandkids, you have to maintain some kind of optimism," he insists. "And even though it's a humble way to fight the idea of cynicism or desperation, there is something about being in a roomful of people singing that makes you feel... hopeful." ■

Neil Finn (right) and Nick Seymour perform onstage at Berlin's Tempodrom in June 2022

● ***Gravity Stairs* is released on 31 May via BMG, and reviewed on page 89. Crowded House return to the UK to play a series of summer outdoor shows, kicking off at the Eden Project on 12 June.**

COMPILED BY RUSTY EGAN FROM HIS 1979-1980 DJ SET LISTS

Includes an illustrated booklet with new sleeve notes by Rusty Egan and Alexis Petridis

66-track 4CD edition and a 36-track 4LP box set

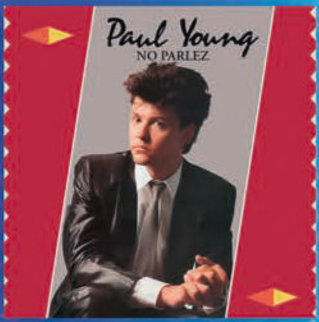
FEATURES MUSIC FROM KRAFTWERK, JAPAN, THE HUMAN LEAGUE, GIORGIO MORODER AND MANY MORE.

AVAILABLE TO PRE-ORDER NOW

MORE FROM DEMON MUSIC

Disco Discharge Presents Box Of Sin (5CD/4LP)

Altered Images: Bite (2CD/Half-Speed Master)



Paul Young: No Parlez (2CD)

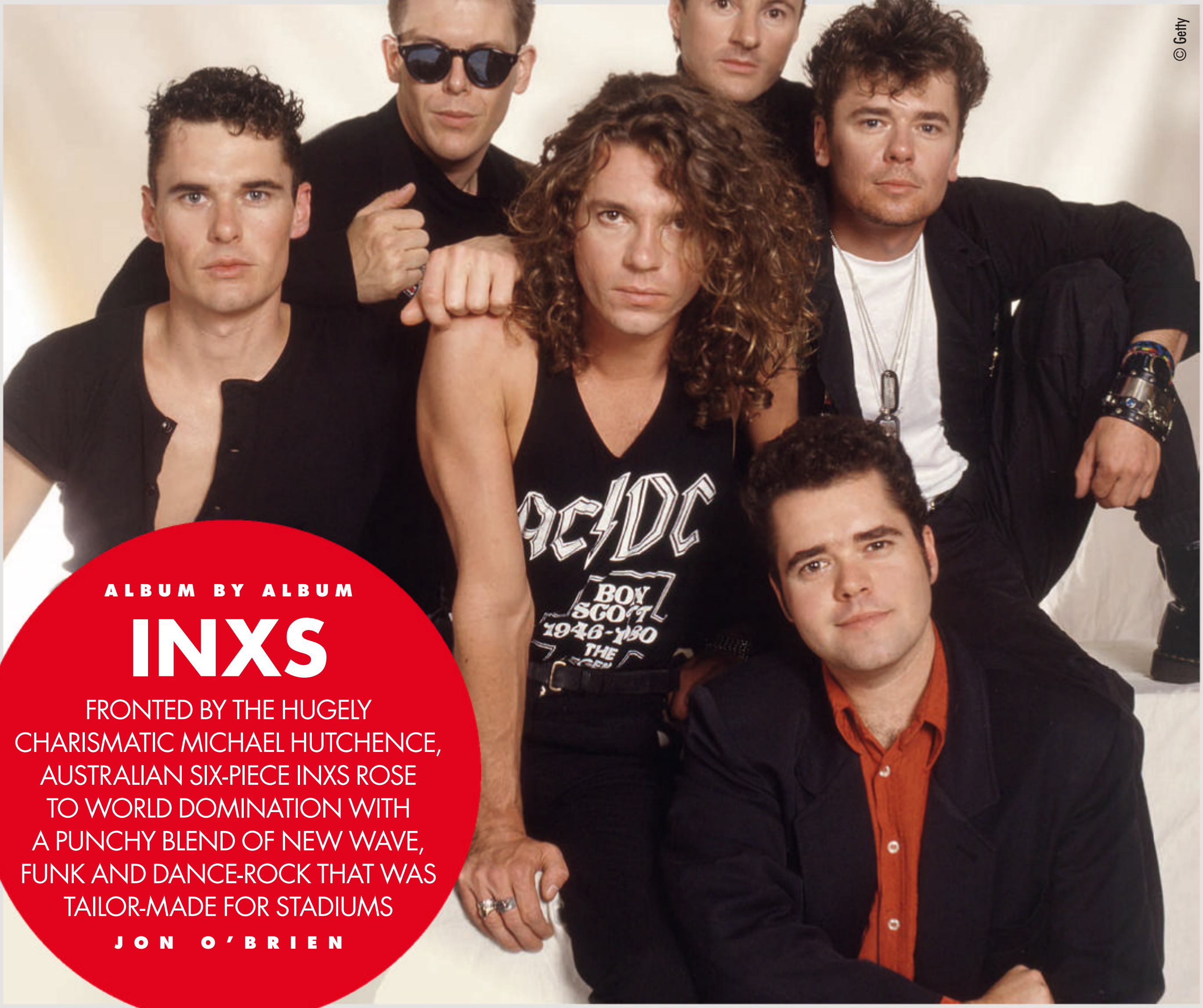
Dead Or Alive: Still Spinnin': The Singles Collection (27CD)

Electribe 101: Electribal Memories (4CD/Half-Speed Master)

Haircut 100: Pelican West 40 (Half-Speed Master)

DEMON MUSIC GROUP

For more information please visit **www.demonmusicgroup.co.uk**



© Getty

ALBUM BY ALBUM

INXS

FRONTED BY THE HUGELY CHARISMATIC MICHAEL HUTCHENCE, AUSTRALIAN SIX-PIECE INXS ROSE TO WORLD DOMINATION WITH A PUNCHY BLEND OF NEW WAVE, FUNK AND DANCE-ROCK THAT WAS TAILOR-MADE FOR STADIUMS

JON O'BRIEN

Initially known as The Farriss Brothers, followed by The Vegetables, INXS thankfully settled on their more familiar guise in time for their eponymous 1980 debut album. They also wisely swerved first manager Gary Morris' suggestion to pursue the Christian market that was beginning to take shape in their native Australia, a direction which would have inevitably robbed the country of its most lascivious rock god.

Instead, drummer Jon Farriss, his multi-instrumentalist siblings Tim and Andrew, guitarist Kirk Pengilly, bassist Garry Gary Beers and frontman Michael Hutchence opted for a less holy blend of post-punk, New Wave and ska which sounded positively soaked in Castlemaine XXXX. That's little surprise when you learn its 10 tracks were recorded in the midnight hours, allowing the sextet to continue building a presence on the Sydney live circuit (and stick within the slim $10,000 budget handed out by fledgling label Deluxe Records).

Indeed, there's little of the gloss that by the end of the same decade would help INXS sell out stadiums far beyond Antipodean waters. Co-produced with Duncan McGuire of 70s jazz fusion outfit Ayers Rock, this LP is raw, raucous and ramshackle stuff which recalls the likes of Men At Work, Midnight Oil and every other band that rose through the no-holds-barred Aussie pub scene. In a fair summary, Hutchence himself later described it as "naïve, kinda cute" and the sign of "young guys struggling for a sound."

You could argue that the group were struggling for words, too. *INXS* contains some of their dodgiest lyrics from "I've got a place with a view, you can see all the cars, hello cars!" on the propulsive closer *Wishy Washy* or the clumsy come-on in *Roller Skating* ("City lights turning green to red/ I know I can't see her/ All I want to do is take her to bed"). Hutchence, who spends most of the record yelping and hollering, comes across less of a smooth lothario and more of an excitable dork. The allbum does boast at least a couple of tunes that would merit a place on an INXS Best Of. The Joe Jackson-esque opener *On A Bus*, for example, and *Just Keep Walking*, the angry young man anthem which became their first Top 40 back home. But it's one of those records which was no doubt more fun to make than it is to listen to.

HUTCHENCE HIMSELF LATER DESCRIBED IT AS THE SIGN OF "YOUNG GUYS STRUGGLING FOR A SOUND"

INXS
Released 1980
Label Deluxe
Chart Positions
AUS No.27 US No.164

INXS have never been particularly rapturous about their second album either. Indeed, although Hutchence believed that *Underneath The Colours* was a step up from their "cheapie" debut album, Pengilly argued that it suffered from a lack of preparation having been recorded immediately after their first major national tour.

Both parties have a point. Produced by Richard Clapton, something of a cult hero on the Aussie singer-songwriter scene, its 10 tracks display a maturity that had previously been lacking. There's nothing that could be mistaken for The Wiggles this time round. And while *INXS* had seemed like a conscious attempt to replicate their live energy on record, *Underneath The Colours* was the sound of a band recognising that the studio itself can be a force for creative good.

But while Clapton's unfussy, spacious production gives the six-piece more time to breathe (see the ominous slow-burner *Horizons*) there's a sketchiness which proves INXS were still light years away from the honed, hit-making machine they'd later become. How the record could have benefited from *The Loved One*, the edgy cover of The Loved Ones' rock'n'roll classic which earlier in the year had sent INXS into Australia's Top 20. It's perhaps telling that none of its three singles followed suit.

INXS WERE STILL LIGHT YEARS AWAY FROM THE HONED, HIT-MAKING MACHINE THEY'D LATER BECOME

That's not to say *Underneath The Colours* is entirely devoid of hooks. The title track finds Hutchence channelling not Mick Jagger but David Bowie on a prime slice of 70s art rock which could have escaped from the latter's Berlin trilogy.

Vibrant opener *Stay Young* is the band's most convincing attempt to ape the ska movement dominating the music scene on the other side of the world. And it's practically impossible to hear the rockabilly of *Night Of Rebellion* without tapping your toes.

Furthermore, the three tracks penned solely by Hutchence and Andrew Farriss (*Stay Young*, *Horizons*, *Underneath The Colours*) would lay the foundations for what would become one of the late 80s most potent songwriting partnerships. However, as with its predecessor, it's not difficult to see why *Underneath The Colours* has been paid dust.

UNDERNEATH THE COLOURS
Released 1981
Label Deluxe
Chart Positions
AUS No.15

With the band finally making waves outside of Australia and New Zealand, INXS didn't take any chances with their fourth LP, recruiting the one and only Nile Rodgers in the same year that the disco legend produced No.1s for superstars Duran Duran (*The Reflex*) and Madonna (*Like A Virgin*). *The Swing* didn't exactly propel INXS into the same big league – although it reached the top spot back home, it could only peak at No.52 on the Billboard 200 in the US – but it continued to steady the ship until monster hit-making gold was struck.

Recorded in various Sydney studios, New York's famous Power Station and Oxfordshire's The Manor, the latter with Nick Launay (Midnight Oil, The Birthday Party), the globe-trotting LP did at least provide the band with another bona fide smash.

And although the world peace messaging of the Daryl Hall-assisted *Original Sin* – remarkably their first and still only Australian No.1 single – is about as nuanced as your average Miss World speech, it deservedly remained a setlist staple.

The sorry state of the universe in 1984 appeared to be a prevalent topic of conversation for the band, with *Dancing On The Jetty* also displaying something of a hippy mentality ("Watch the world argue/ Argue with itself/ Who's going to teach me/ Peace and happiness"). But you don't look to an INXS album for profound statements on diplomatic issues. You do, however, expect plenty of taut guitar riffs, danceable beats and buckets of swagger. And *The Swing* certainly delivers on that front, with *Melting In The Sun*, *Face The Change* and *Burn For You* all serving as *Kick*-era prototypes. Meanwhile, *Johnson's Aeroplane*, a celebratory, if sonically creepy, ode to the nation's farmers, also proved that the Aussies could be just as magnetic when they weren't soundtracking the party.

EXPECT PLENTY OF TAUT GUITAR RIFFS, DANCEABLE BEATS AND BUCKETS OF SWAGGER

Interestingly, the UK still didn't bite, with *The Swing*'s four singles and the album itself all failing to make any significant headway there whatsoever. But this would be the last time that the land of Paula Yates, *The Tube* and *The Big Breakfast*, remained completely immune to Michael Hutchence's rock star charms.

THE SWING
Released 1984
Label Warner
Chart Positions
AUS No.1 US No.52

Shabooh Shoobah may boast the worst album title in INXS's back catalogue – apparently named in honour of the onomatopoeic percussive sound in *Spy Of Love* – but it's the first time the group showed glimpses of their world-conquering future. Not only did it spend 94 weeks on the ARIA album chart, but it also spawned a couple of Hot 100 hits in the States and by the end of the campaign, the one-time local stars were sharing the US Festival bill with The Clash.

Best-known for his work with harder-rocking Aussies AC/DC and Cold Chisel, Mark Opitz appeared to be the catalyst for this global breakthrough. Channelling the playlists of early 80s MTV, from The Police (Aboriginal tale *Jan's Song*) to Devo (buoyant drinking anthem *Golden Playpen*) to tourmates Adam And The Ants (the percussive *Black And White*), the producer skilfully applied some much-needed spit and polish without sacrificing the band's barroom roots.

But Hutchence can also take much of the credit, co-writing all but one of its 10 tracks, and on New Wave stomper *The One Thing* and sweeping disco-punk of closer *Don't Change* – an instant classic that's been covered by acts including Bruce Springsteen and Limp Bizkit – displaying the natural self-assurance that would eventually become his trademark.

SHABOOH SHOOBAH
Released 1982
Label Warner
Chart Positions
AUS No.5 US No.46

"I hadn't seen a gig that exciting or a band having that kind of effect on people in years," said Chris Thomas after checking out INXS at the Hollywood Bowl in 1984, as quoted in their 2005 autobiography. And having co-produced Sex Pistols' *Never Mind The Bollocks*, who better to try replicating this raw magnetism on record?

Using then-career highpoint *Don't Change* as the blueprint, *Listen Like Thieves* abandons any political ideals and aims straight for the party jugular, harnessing Hutchence's Jim Morrison-meets-Mick Jagger presence more effectively than ever. Even Princess Diana seemed enamoured when the six-piece interrupted their accompanying tour to headline a Melbourne royal appointment.

From the Prince-esque funk of opener *What You Need* – the first of seven US Top 10s – to hard-rocking closer *Red Red Sun*, INXS ooze confidence and devil-may-care attitude. They even throw in a quirky Amazonian-themed instrumental, *Three Sisters*, just for the hell of it.

The ever-hostile domain that was the 80s *NME* may not have been convinced – 'INX-cusable' was the scathing verdict – but with the debonair *Kiss The Dirt (Falling Down The Mountain)*, break-up anthem *This Time* and bluesy title track all around the lower reaches of the charts, the Aussies were on the verge of winning over the Poms.

LISTEN LIKE THIEVES
Released 1985
Label Warner
Chart Positions
UK No.48 US No.11

In a sign of just how ambitious INXS had become, the Chris Thomas-produced *Kick* was designed specifically as an album in which every track could be released as a single. In the end, it spawned an official five, although thanks to an accompanying Bob Dylan parody video for *Mediate* and a re-recorded version of 1981 cover *The Loved One*, the general familiarity level was much higher.

Remarkably, four made the US Top 10, with the sultry *Devil Inside* and live-for-the-moment anthem *New Sensation* bookended by their two defining hits. Written, like much of the blockbuster record, during an inspiration-seeking trip to Hong Kong, *Need You Tonight* may have been the biggest: the combination of Farriss' deliciously slinky guitar riffs and Hutchence's walking libido vocals topping the US Hot 100 and coming within a whisker of repeating the feat this side of the Atlantic.

But it's *Never Tear Us Apart*, initially composed as a Fats Domino-style blues number, which remains INXS' crowning glory. Boasting Pengilly's most heartbreaking sax solo and Hutchence's most wounded delivery, the orchestral waltz entered the Great Australian Songbook immediately, with its inherent sombreness also later becoming a fitting soundtrack for the band's darkest day, their frontman's funeral.

Yet *Kick* has more to offer than its impeccable run of hits. Opener *Guns In The Sky*, an anti-nuclear war anthem taking aim at Ronald Reagan's 'Star Wars' initiative, proved that Hutchence could pen a funk rock stomper entirely on his own, while the motivational title track and eerily prescient closer *Tiny Daggers* ("Do you ever stop to think/ Where it went wrong for you") both fulfilled the brief, too.

CRYSTALLISING EVERYTHING GREAT ABOUT THE GROUP'S PREVIOUS FIVE ALBUMS, *KICK* DOMINATED THE MTV AWARDS

Crystallising everything great about the group's previous five albums, *Kick* dominated the MTV Awards, spawned a 16-month world tour and, having shifted more than 10 million globally, is one of the all-time biggest Aussie sellers. And its legacy is still growing: the record recently soundtracked a key storyline in Gen Z's parent-scaring drama *Euphoria*.

Incredibly, despite its blockbuster potential, *Kick* was dismissed on first hearing by US label Atlantic. In fact, only manager Chris Murphy's last-ditch suggestion to target college radio saved the LP from a $1 million re-recording, which would have robbed us of an all-time stadium rock great.

KICK
Released 1987
Label Warner
Chart Positions
UK No.9 US No.3

Having explored various musical avenues outside the band – Hutchence with duo Max Q, Beers with the similarly short-lived Absent Friends and Andrew Farriss producing singer-songwriter Jenny Morris – INXS reconvened with Chris Thomas for a third time on an LP which some accused of being as unimaginative as its title.

Named in honour of their 10th anniversary as a fully-fledged recording act, *X* showed little evidence of their extracurricular activities. 'The same but bigger' appeared to be the dominant mantra, no doubt inspired by the super-sized Rhinoceros 2 Sydney studio which essentially compelled everything to be turned up to 11.

Admittedly, several of its 11 tracks instil a sense of déjà vu. Written about the loneliness of touring, the stately *By My Side* is a blatant retread of *Never Tear Us Apart*, while the harmonica-driven *Suicide Blonde*, a term coined by Hutchence's then-girlfriend Kylie Minogue to describe her wig in *The Delinquents*, mines the same funk-rock territory of *Kick*'s other hits. "And it's all been felt before," Hutchence sings on *Who Pays The Price*, inadvertently paraphrasing their unimpressed critics.

But *X* isn't always as tried and tested as the music press, no doubt determined to bring the superstar-dating, tabloid-friendly Hutchence down a peg or two, made out.

The housey piano keys on people-power anthem *Hear That Sound* and *Bitter Tears* suggests that the Second Summer of Love hadn't entirely passed the Aussies by. *On My Way*, one of three tracks to feature the harmonica talents of legendary Chicagoan Charlie Musselwhite, is a barnstorming number proving that Depeche Mode didn't have the 1990 monopoly on lustful blues.

And although *The Stairs* isn't quite the game-changer the band promised, its saddening portrait of inner-city life is INXS at their most poetic.

NAMED IN HONOUR OF THEIR 10TH ANNIVERSARY, 'THE SAME BUT BIGGER' APPEARED TO BE THE DOMINANT MANTRA

X didn't do anywhere near the same numbers as its phenomenal predecessor. It was never going to. But capped off with a sold-out Wembley show and two BRITs (one strangely for Hutchence as Best International Male), it still deserves to be categorised under their imperial phase.

X
Released 1990
Label Warner
Chart Positions
UK No.2 US No.5

A 60-piece orchestra, some Middle Eastern instrumentation, layers of distortion and backing vocals from Pengilly's future wife Deni Hines. Even with the return of *Shabooh Shoobah* producer Mark Opitz, INXS's eighth studio effort could never be accused of simply retreading over old ground.

Indeed, *Welcome To Wherever You Are* is undoubtedly the sextet's most experimental affair, veering from the baggy-adjacent pop of *Taste It* to the Velvet Underground-inspired melancholy of *Beautiful Girl* with a maturity befitting of a band now all well into their mid-thirties.

Exemplifying the fact the Aussies were no longer the new kids in town, *Welcome...* was essentially a two-man job, with most members forced to take a backseat due to very grown-up issues: brothers Jon and Tim were busy dealing with an impending wedding and bone condition exostosis, respectively, Pengilly had just split up with his girlfriend of 10 years, while Beers was gearing up to become a father once again.

Perhaps this lack of interference emboldened Michael Hutchence and the only Farriss sibling not in the midst of a life-changing development to cast the musical net a little wider. Recruiting the Australian Concert Orchestra for two tracks was certainly an inspired move, their symphonic arrangements further enhancing the anthemic nature of second single *Baby Don't Cry* and giving the brooding, beatless closer *Men And Women* a touch of John Barry classiness.

But even when the band aren't pushing their boundaries, as on the Iggy Pop-esque garage rock of *Heaven Sent* and the stadium-friendly tech satire *Communication* ("Spinning metal blue satellite/ Your dish responds/ Communication disinformation/ So entertaining"), they sound highly re-energised.

WELCOME TO WHEREVER YOU ARE IS UNDOUBTEDLY THE SEXTET'S MOST EXPERIMENTAL AFFAIR

Welcome To Wherever You Are might be where America checked out – it charted no higher than No.16 on the Billboard 200. But fans across the other side of the pond rewarded the group's new-found dynamism with their sole UK No.1 album: even the typically sniffy music press got on board, with Q magazine declaring it as "a far more engaging and heartfelt collection than anything the group has put out in recent memory." More than 30 years on, it's stood the test of time, too.

WELCOME TO WHEREVER YOU ARE
Released 1992
Label East West
Chart Positions
UK No.1 US No.16

INXS's ninth LP arrived following the devastating Copenhagen attack which left their frontman with a fractured skull, impacted his ability to taste and smell and, according to those closest to him, changed his entire personality for the darker. Indeed, although its Capri island surroundings were idyllic, the recording of *Full Moon, Dirty Hearts* was anything but, with a clearly troubled Hutchence increasingly prone to violent outbursts.

Little wonder, therefore, that their third collaboration with Opitz isn't exactly a laugh-a-minute affair. *Kill The Pain*, which at times threatens to break out into Annie Lennox's *Why*, is a haunting piano ballad where Hutchence sounds at his lowest ebb.

There's a similar sense of despondency running through the early ambience of *Freedom Deep* before it bursts into the kind of widescreen desert rock U2 perfected on *The Joshua Tree*. And the barroom blues of the title track duet with Chrissie Hynde is more whisky-soaked requiem than celebratory singalong.

Even when the Aussies up the tempo, they can't shake off the air of quiet menace. The industrial rock of *The Gift* suggests they were listening to Nine Inch Nails in between all the band squabbles. And the tendency to channel Jim Morrison with the spoken word segments on *I'm Only Looking* and fuzzy psychedelic closer *Viking Juice* serves as further proof that Hutchence was suffering an identity crisis.

Full Moon, Dirty Hearts isn't all doom and gloom, to be fair. After bumping into each other at a Parisian studio, INXS somehow managed to convince Ray Charles to lend his gritty voice to the no-nonsense blues rocker *Please (You Got That...)*.

THE INDUSTRIAL ROCK OF *THE GIFT* SUGGEST THEY WERE LISTENING TO NINE INCH NAILS BETWEEN BAND SQUABBLES

And there are still signs of the Hutchence swagger on opener *Days Of Rust* and the Rolling Stones-ish stomper *Time*. But despite an exhaustive video campaign in which all 12 tracks were treated to promos directed by young filmmakers (was a young Beyoncé taking notes by any chance ?), the record adhered to the law of diminishing commercial returns.

FULL MOON, DIRTY HEARTS
Released 1993
Label East West
Chart Positions
UK No.3 US No.53

Named after the most inspirational line from *New Sensation*, *Live Baby Live* essentially brings down the curtain on the world-conquering chapter of INXS's career.

The original version, which added to the band's tally of UK Top 10 albums, was recorded across the Aussies' Summer XS Tour of 1991, a period when Hutchence was just about clinging onto his premier rock god status.

The frontman certainly justifies such a tag during a setlist which, inevitably, is dominated by the one-two punch of *Kick* and *X* – *The One Thing* and *Burn For You* are the only nods to their days as a local concern.

Indeed, judging by the screams emitted after each song, all of which sound precision-tooled for stadium venues, Hutchence still possessed the kind of charisma which left every single audience member in the palm of his hand.

A second edition, recorded entirely at Wembley Stadium in front of 74,000 fans, added five other INXS favourites, most notably singles *Original Sin* and *Devil Inside*.

While the accompanying concert film, released first on VHS, then DVD and then in 2019, cinemas, gave others the chance to witness the six-piece's no-frills ("No ego ramps, no back-up singers, no props, no grand pianos," Tim Farriss once proudly declared) but full-powered performance style in all its glory.

LIVE BABY LIVE
Released 1991
Label East West
Chart Positions
UK No.8 US No.72

In the three years since 1994's *The Greatest Hits*, Hutchence had been arrested for both assaulting a paparazzi photographer and drug possession, entered into a tabloid-friendly relationship with Paula Yates after one of the most flirtatious interviews ever captured on TV and started work on an eponymous solo record inspired by Black Grape. Throw in the loss of the Farriss brothers' mother Jill and Pengilly's divorce, and it's a wonder that *Elegantly Wasted* ever got made at all.

Sadly, due to the tragic events that unfolded seven months later, the album proved to be less of a triumphant return and more of an epitaph. The band's world was torn apart when Hutchence was found dead in his Sydney hotel room on 22 November 1997 at the age of just 37.

There is an inevitable temptation, therefore, to rake through every lyric looking for clues of his deeply troubled state. And yet *Elegantly Wasted* is a largely optimistic, vibrant affair steeped in the decadence of INXS's imperial phase. The Britpop-esque title track was reportedly inspired by a wild evening with long-time pal Bono. *Don't Lose Your Head* is a defiant riposte to Liam Gallagher ("Shot your mouth off like a kid/ Who's scared to have a heart/ You're losing grip of what really matters") which added further fuel to the INXS/Oasis rivalry: a year earlier, Noel had wounded Hutchence by declaring him a has-been live on the BRIT Awards stage. And even opener *Show Me (Cherry Baby)*, a tribute to a late singer once mentored by the Aussie rock god, boasts a *Kick*-like essence.

Co-producer Bruce Fairbairn, the mastermind behind Aerosmith's *Get A Grip* and Bon Jovi's *Slippery When Wet*, also revealed that Hutchence was in good spirits throughout its recording. But the band's new-found vigour sadly didn't restore their former commercial glories: *Elegantly Wasted* only just scraped the UK Top 20 and missed the US Top 40 altogether. Noel's very public assertion had undoubtedly been cruel, but it was ultimately grounded in truth.

Of course, the record didn't turn out to be the group's unplanned swansong purported at the time of Hutchence's untimely passing. The surviving five-piece would valiantly, and some would say foolishly, soldier on for another two albums. However, with several tracks worthy of joining their previous compilation, it remains a solid, if unspectacular, farewell from the only incarnation of INXS that truly matters.

ELEGANTLY WASTED IS A LARGELY OPTIMISTIC AFFAIR STEEPED IN THE DECADENCE OF INXS's IMPERIAL PHASE

ELEGANTLY WASTED
Released 1997
Label Mercury
Chart Positions
UK No.16 US No.41

Following a short stint with Jon Stevens of fellow Aussie rockers Noiseworks, INXS continued to dismay the purists by selecting their Hutchence replacement through the least rock'n'roll way possible: a prime-time TV talent show.

After 11 weeks of showboating, J.D. Fortune, a Canadian former Elvis impersonator chosen for his "slightly dangerous edge", was given the poisoned chalice. Alas, victory was always going to be a no-win situation. Try to stamp your identity on the band and risk alienating what's left of their fanbase. Try to replicate Hutchence's distinctive tones and risk being dismissed as a tribute act. From the opening notes of the LP that no one really asked for, it's clear he had chosen option B. In fact, if you weren't aware of *Switch*'s tawdry origins, you may assume that its 11 tracks were long-lost outtakes from the vaults. And ones, for the most part, you wished had stayed there.

Sunset Strip throwback *Hot Girls*, for example, may be the nadir of the group's discography. Hutchence skilfully treaded that line between pure horn dog and sleaze. Fortune, however, is about as unsubtle as a copy of *Nuts* magazine. The fact that, like the rest of the LP, it was produced by Guy Chambers perhaps explains why his once-winning set-up with Robbie Williams had dissolved so fast. *Pretty Vegas*, a surprise US Top 40 hit, and *Like It Or Not* are similarly overcooked.

Switch isn't entirely without merit. *Afterglow* and *God's Top Ten* are tributes to the band's fallen idol, the latter touchingly addressed to his daughter Tiger Lily, while *Perfect Strangers*, boasts the kind of sky-scraping chorus that once put the group on rock's A-list. But, like Queen's Paul Rodgers-fronted *The Cosmos Rocks*, *Switch* proves that some frontmen are simply irreplaceable.

IF YOU WEREN'T AWARE OF ITS ORIGINS, YOU MAY ASSUME ITS 11 TRACKS WERE OUTTAKES FROM THE VAULTS

SWITCH
Released 2005
Label Epic
Chart Positions
AUS No.18 US No.17

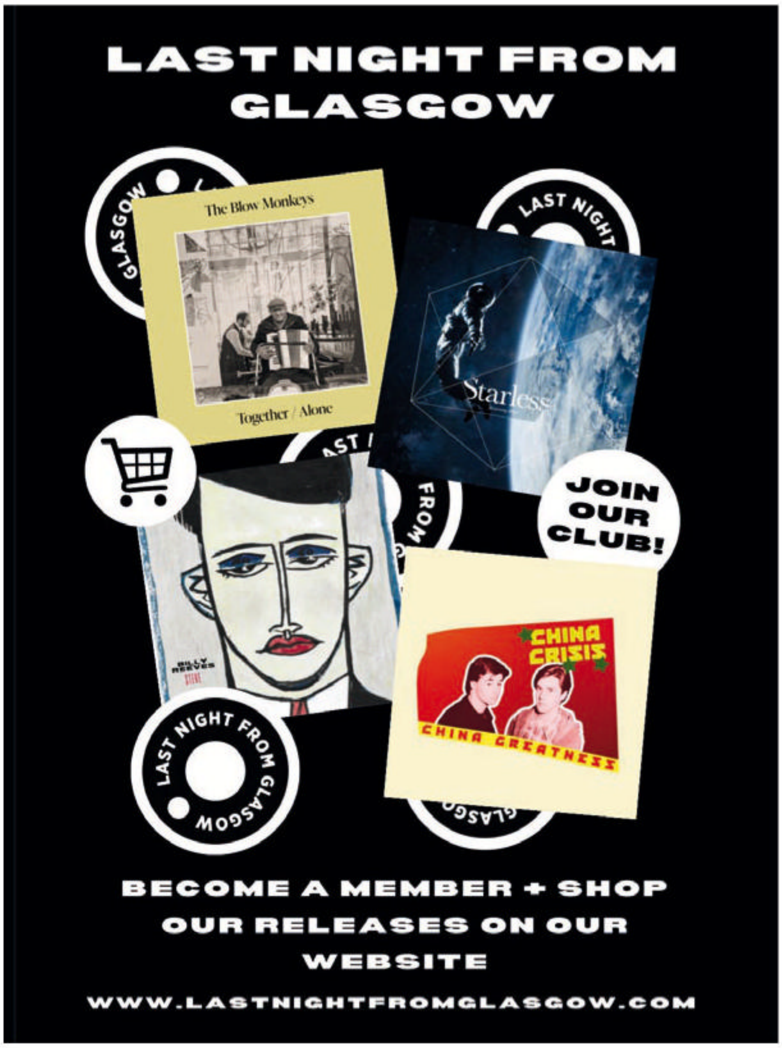
The final chapter of INXS's turbulent story began wrapping up in 2010 with a compilation that saw artists as diverse as Train's Pat Monahan and French chanteuse Mylène Farmer fill in for their late frontman. It's an intriguing, but not always particularly successful, experiment.

Trip-hop legend Tricky's whispered mutterings complement the distorted guitars and warped basslines on *Mediate* to heighten the original's sense of peril. Argentinian singer-songwriter Deborah De Corral transforms *New Sensation* into a melancholic slice of acoustic blues, while John Mayer and Parisian songstress Loane give *Mystify* a sensual space-rock makeover.

In contrast, the title track is subjected to a hideous Gallic house treatment made more painful by Rob Thomas' overwrought tones. A choral version of *Don't Change* performed by Pengilly and Andrew Farriss explains why Hutchence always took lead vocals. And the whole thing bizarrely opens with a brand-new instrumental that sounds like a number from the musical *STOMP*. A brief spell with Northern Irish vocalist Ciaran Gribbin followed. But in 2012, INXS decided to start reflecting on, rather than trying to extend, their legacy, with various projects – notably 2019's *Mystify* – welcome reminders that at their peak, few did the stadium rock shtick better.

ORIGINAL SIN
Released 2010
Label Petrol Electric
Chart Position
AUS No.49

22 - 25 AUGUST
BANK HOLIDAY
BACK2FESTIVAL 2024
THORESBY PARK, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
HEADLINERS
eternal WET WET WET BANANARAMA
ARTISTS
THE SOUTH feat. Alison Wheeler
vengaboys
cascada
DJ SASH!
Five
REDNEX
LET LOOSE
Symphonic Ibiza
ANDY WHITBY
THE OUTHERE BROTHERS
MARTIN KEMP TOTALLY 80'S
DJ LUCK & MC NEAT
ARTFUL DODGER
DANNY BYRD
DAVE PEARCE
PAT SHARP
HIXXY
NAVI
LANGE
THE SPACE BROTHERS
CRAIG CONNELLY
rob tissera
MARTIN LIBERTY LARNER
SIGNUM
SKILLZ & CARDIAC
jasonfubar
JFK
JAMES DEAN
DJ BUGZEE & KOFI B • JAIMESON & VIPER • MARC WEST • TT
BACK 2 RESIDENTS
ROBBIE LEWIS • RICH HALPIN • MACH • STIG & STAN
TICKETS:
BACK2FESTIVAL.COM


LAST NIGHT FROM GLASGOW
The Blow Monkeys
Together / Alone
Starless
JOIN OUR CLUB!
CHINA CRISIS
CHINA GREATNESS
BECOME A MEMBER + SHOP OUR RELEASES ON OUR WEBSITE
WWW.LASTNIGHTFROMGLASGOW.COM

"ELECTRIFYING"
SCENE MAGAZINE
"PET SHOP BOYS ON ACID!"
DISCOVER BRIGHTON
"AN IMPRESSIVE DEBUT!"
CLASSIC POP
FOLLOW THE LADS
@LADSCLUBDISCO
LADSCLUB
THE ALBUM - OUT NOW
ON ALL DIGITAL AND STREAMING PLATFORMS

The wait is over – Sananda Maitreya returns with a new album and will play live in the UK for the first time in 22 years

WIN A SIGNED COPY OF SANANDA MAITREYA'S NEW STUDIO ALBUM!

Classic Pop is thrilled to offer its readers an exclusive chance to win one of five signed copies of Sananda Maitreya's brand new album, *The Pegasus Project: Pegasus & The Swan*, which is due for release on 11 May.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO ENTER

© Manuel Scrima

"I'M GOING TO GRAB YOUR BALLS AND TAKE THEM FOR A SQUEEZE!"

Over 20 years since he last played in the UK, Sananda Maitreya is making his live return to the country where he rose to fame 37 years ago. It coincides with his primary-coloured 13th album. The singer-songwriter reveals why Britain is an emotionally troubled place to visit, how kids' TV has influenced his own work and why he's repulsed by trumpet players...

JOHN EARLS

Music has a long history of being influenced by singers becoming parents. Sananda Maitreya might not have written any direct odes to his two sons, 13-year-old Francesco and Federico, 11, but fatherhood has reminded Maitreya of a valuable lesson about songwriting.

"When my sons were born, I was confronted by baby TV every day," says Sananda from his home in Milan, where he's lived since meeting his wife, Francesca, at the start of the century. "One of the first things I noticed about those children's shows is their background music is pretty sophisticated. The music is simple, but their arrangements are clever. It helped me recalibrate to the genius of simplicity, of music in its purest form."

For a singer who grew up wanting to be "the charming, elegant guy who had a Shakespearean turn of phrase and could make the ladies swoon", the power of words has been important to Maitreya since his debut album *Introducing The Hardline* in 1987.

New album *The Pegasus Project: Pegasus & The Swan* completes a trilogy begun with 2017's *Prometheus & Pandora*. Sananda admits of that first album about the story of Prometheus' exile from Mount Olympus: "With *Prometheus & Pandora,* I might have been too precious about the lyrics. It was something I had to go through, so that with the next project, *Pandora's PlayHouse,* I became more conscious to take some of the pressure off the words."

Now, Sananda's attitude to his lyrics is: "Not everything has to be me showing that I'm a son of the Romantic poets: I can just say some shit that fits. I blame Bob Dylan for fucking us all up. While it was hugely important for Dylan to demonstrate the capacity for depth and profundity in lyrics, even he will tell you he's never written a more profound lyric than 'A-wop-bop-a-loo-bop-a-wop-bam-boom.' So, who's smarter: Dylan or Little Richard?"

There's a debate for the ages, and one that seems to sum up the dichotomy of Sananda Maitreya: half Dylan, half Little Richard. Ever since he left behind his original identity of Terence Trent D'Arby, the mainstream has treated Maitreya with suspicion. Because he won't just sing *Wishing Well* and *If You Let Me Stay* on

Pegasus & The Swan is the final chapter in Sananda Maitreya's trilogy of Prometheus-based albums and was preceded by 2017's *Prometheus & Pandora* and *Pandora's PlayHouse* four years later

© Manuel Scrima

"ARTISTS GROW UP UNDERMINED BY SO MANY CLICHÉS. I LOVE DRAWING A LINE THROUGH THEM ONE BY ONE."

demand, he's generally been seen as aloof and earnest. Not a bit of it. He's enthusiastic about any subject put to him, and he's a funny badass, too.

Asked about why his recent albums feature at least 30 songs each, Sananda responds: "Artists grow up undermined by so many clichés: nobody can write so many songs and have them be interesting, nobody writes interesting songs after a certain age. I love looking at those clichés and drawing a line through them one by one, while saying: 'Bullshit'."

ROCKING HORSE

That said, *Pegasus & The Swan* wasn't intended to be such an epic. It's his 13th album. Thirteen is his favourite number, so Sananda had intended making a 13-song, guitar-focused album to mark the occasion. Then, around his 60th birthday in 2022, he realised it was instead time to try to complete the Prometheus cycle. The result is an adventurous and captivating 41-track epic, loosely divided into the more rocking *Pegasus* side, with *The Swan*'s songs incorporating theatrical ballads, operatic extravagance, and moments of tranquil respite. There's also plenty of the hypnotic soul/pop hybrid that first made his name.

Maitreya is aware that, for casual listeners, his tracklisting looks a lot to contend with. "I can't take credit for being prolific," he shrugs. "I may as well belong to Apple, as I'm a phone. Everything coming through me is because I'm designed to do this. My prolific nature is hardwired into me.

"Besides my family life, there's nothing else that really fulfils my divine dissatisfaction. I use my time efficiently, and having songs reveal themselves to me is exciting. But I've said to my wife that I've got to slow down. I don't have to have 40-song projects. I'm a Capricorn Rising, a mountain goat, so it's in my nature to climb. But that mountain is mine and I don't have to climb to anyone's phase but my own. So I can just do 13 songs." A laugh. "But that's how this one was supposed to start. Once the green light is on in the studio, it takes over you."

Typical of that compulsion to get things done was adding the unusually nostalgic *Camden Town* as the album's 41st song, just when Sananda thought he was done. It's a simple banger describing how Maitreya first moved to London from Germany in the mid-80s. He lived in his manager's North London flat and the mischief in the song might not be entirely fictional.

"I'm not really one for nostalgia," says Maitreya, with uncharacteristic understatement. "I've still too much work to do to be influenced by the weight of what I've done in my past. Nostalgia creates its own vortex. Once you start looking over your shoulder, you have those reflexes, so you're always doing that. It's not that time yet, so I didn't think I needed this song."

But the song was so insistent, it essentially demanded to be made. "It came to me intact, going: 'I'm making it easy for you here,'" laughs Sananda. "It had to be taken seriously. I knew if I didn't record it, it'd be buzzing around in my head, like a fly in the kitchen, for the next two years until my next project. I couldn't take that."

Camden Town has echoes of another of the area's residents, Amy Winehouse. "I never met Amy, but I was told she was a fan of mine," Maitreya explains. "She lived close in Camden to where I did. When I heard her record *Frank*, it struck me how much it bears Camden's feel. To motivate myself, I sometimes write songs for other people. My aim with *Camden Town* was: 'Amy would appreciate this.'"

SUPREME BEING

The UK was first to discover his talent, but it's also where Sananda's defenestration from the music industry occurred following 1989's polarising second album *Neither Fish Nor Flesh*. It's left Maitreya reluctant to play here: he hasn't done so since 2002, when audiences were trying to get accustomed to Sananda Maitreya instead of Terence Trent D'Arby.

Finally, at Love Supreme festival in Sussex on 6 July, Sananda will be play here again. He enthuses: "I'm excited to bring these new songs to a live audience. England is emotionally important to me. England was the mother of my career. My last incarnation was birthed in England. Then, as soon as she gave birth to me, she mocked me and told me to fuck off. So, playing in England is impregnated with a great deal of controversy, excitement and some residual bitterness and heartbreak. It took me a longer time than I'd care to admit to get beyond that."

Aware that many refuse to look beyond his releases under his former name, Sananda reasons: "Until the scene was ready to fully acknowledge the reality I've existed in since the mid-90s, there was no point in me coming to England. Having already been mocked once, I wouldn't allow myself to be mocked twice. But, so long as I'm working on my terms, I'm comfortable going anywhere."

On the idea of singing his old material, Sananda explains: "I operate under the assumption that, whatever it is I do, I'm going to come onstage, grab your balls and take them for a squeeze! That's what it's about, not the idea that I have to be liked with everything I do."

A well-honed live band, The Sugar Plum Pharaohs, is in place to back Maitreya when he tours this year. But, bar a string quartet and an orchestra helmed by leading conductor Diego Basso, Sananda plays everything on the new album himself. "My one proviso for doing it all myself is that I didn't want the songs to sound like a one-man-band," he emphasises.

"I sometimes hear albums where I can tell if someone has done it all themselves. If you don't know it's me doing it, I want you to think: 'Hey, that's a pretty cool band behind him.'"

That virtuosity has been present since childhood. He grins: "I can take a vacuum cleaner and get a song out of it. As a boy, one of the most exciting times was when my mother would vacuum the house, as I'd start harmonising with its drone. At the heart of it all, I'm an arranger."

Sananda also feels fortunate to have grown up in Florida, surrounded by so many different types of music. "If you want a musical education, there's no better place to be raised," he reflects. "A gig was a gig, so if someone said they needed a bassist, you raised your hand. Same if someone needed a fiddle player. Later, people looked at me and said: 'Oh my god, he plays all these instruments!', but it just wasn't a thing when I was a kid. It was just part of the culture I came through."

Has any instrument defeated him? "There's nothing I can't play that I'm interested in playing. But as a boy, I saw a trumpeter open his valve to let the spit out. That was: 'Eurgh, no thanks!' If there's spit involved, you've lost me, so I've never been drawn to horns."

Being able to function so prolifically is one reason Maitreya has little time for his past. It's not that he's ungrateful to the music that made him, he's simply more excited by what's next. Sananda explains: "After I master a record, I generally don't listen to it again. I'm already moving onto the next thing and don't like dwelling on what I could have done differently."

INTO MILAN

Initially, Sananda Maitreya moved to Milan from Los Angeles because he'd fallen for his wife Francesca, an architect and TV presenter who now also manages her husband's career (with great charm and efficiency, from *CP*'s dealings with her).

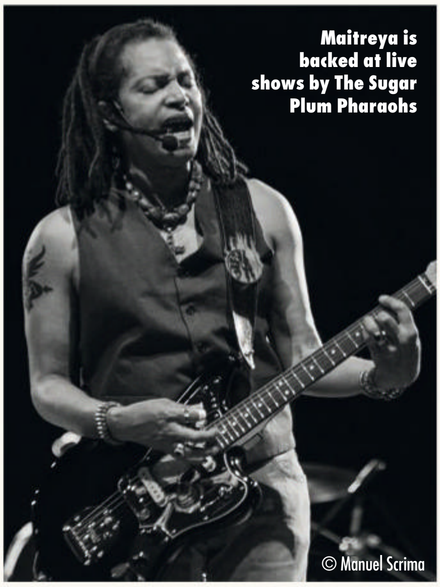
Sananda had lived in L.A. for 12 years, but was ready for a fresh start to go with his new identity. "I thought I'd only be in Los Angeles for five years," he remembers. "The spiritual and emotional breadth of Europe was something I'd begun to miss in Los Angeles. Living there felt like a mission I'd been assigned and I didn't need that mission anymore. I'd assumed I'd be going back to England or Germany but, because of my wife, I wound up in Milano."

The singer hails Milan as "a live and let live town" where he's free to live how he wishes. He continues: "People are friendly when they've earned the right to know you. Otherwise, they leave you to get on with your life. It's the financial centre of Italy. Everyone is focused on money. That can be of benefit to an artist. When everyone else is consumed by finance, it makes it easier to do what you want, because nobody is fucking with whatever it is you want to do.

"Milano is also a craftsman's town. It's not only an artistically historically brilliant town, it has an energy where there is always work in progress."

Sananda with his wife Francesca – architect, journalist, TV host and manager

© Manuel Scrima



Maitreya is backed at live shows by The Sugar Plum Pharaohs

© Manuel Scrima

SELF MADE

Despite seeking to maintain that distance from his old songs, Maitreya was delighted when, by chance, he recently heard a song – he forgets which – from his 2011 album *The Sphinx*. Before realising it was his own song, he'd loved its intro and thought "I need to write a song like this." There's another laugh: "That's the good side of being prolific. I do occasionally look at a song I wrote in my twenties and think: 'How the fuck did you come up with that? You weren't on drugs and you wrote *that*? How did I know that stuff?' It's not that the song has a universal truth to

© Manuel Scrima

"When you have a psyche that's no longer functional, you petition another psyche," Maitreya explained to *The Guardian* on the subject of his name change

"BEFORE EACH ALBUM, I'LL ASSIGN A GENDER TO IT. DOES IT FEEL MORE DIVINE FEMININE OR DIVINE MASCULINE? IT GIVES A SONIC IDENTITY."

impart, more that it'll pre-shadow what I'd go through later in my life – and it nails it."

Sananda feels the same precocious wisdom from Tracy Chapman, whose self-titled debut album was released the year after *Introducing The Hardline*. He loved Tracy's acclaimed recent Grammys performance of *Fast Car* and admits: "I slept on that song. At the time, I thought it was good, but I didn't think it was great. But the timelessness of *Fast Car*, how universal it is? A hundred years from now, *Fast Car* will still be relevant and consequential."

BRINGING SEXY BACK

While most people in Britain haven't had a chance to see Sananda Maitreya for over 20 years, *Classic Pop* is happy to report he's aged as well as you'd hope. Even with a navy beanie covering his hair, Sananda is distressingly handsome, casually bearded and eyes glinting with mischief as he discusses the sensual pop of new tunes *Bondage* and *The Things U Like*, laughing: "Sexy sells. I'm certainly trying to capture feeling sexy in those songs."

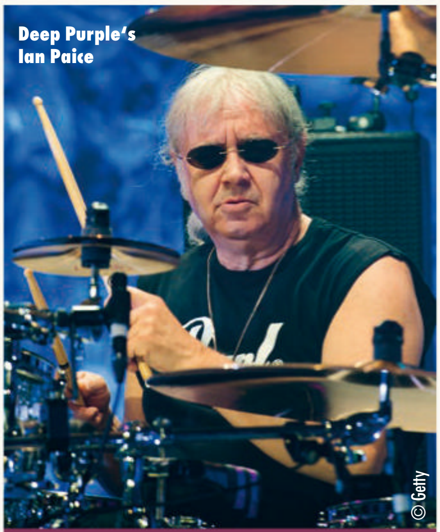
Such Princely earthiness typifies an album Maitreya feels is "more primary coloured" than his previous LP, *Pandora's PlayHouse*. "Before each album, I'll assign a gender to it," he notes. "Does it feel more divine feminine, divine masculine, Shiva the destroyer, Krishna the nurturer? It gives a sonic identity and helps me choose the instruments, down to which pick-ups on the guitars to deploy.

"Then you notice little footprints going somewhere in the songs. You're on the kitchen floor, going: 'Where do these little mouse prints lead? This is where it comes from, this is where it goes back out. Aha!' The footsteps make you see a pattern to where you've been going."

Planning both a documentary about his life and a musical based on telling his story through his Promethean album cycle, Maitreya won't be slowing down any time soon. That shorter guitar-based album might just be his next project.

Whatever happens, Sananda Maitreya will be living his best life. On one condition. "At some point, I've got to play you some music," he reasons. "Every now and again, the bear has to come out of the cave." ■

● *The Pegasus Project: Pegasus & The Swan* is released on 11 May via Treehouse and reviewed on page 90. Sananda Maitreya plays at the Love Supreme festival on 6 July.



Deep Purple's Ian Paice

© Getty

KEEP UP THE PAICE

For a recent Seal reissue celebration, Sananda Maitreya was approached to do a duet. "We were excited by the idea," reveals Sananda. "But it had to fit a certain deadline and we were up against the clock, so it didn't wind up working out."

Instead, Maitreya is part of a forthcoming supergroup started by Deep Purple's Ian Paice. The hard rock drummer has made a new album featuring Sananda and Free's Paul Rodgers as the vocalists, alongside guitar greats Joe Satriani, Steve Vai and Joe Bonamassa, Deep Purple keyboardist Don Airey and veteran session bassist Leland Sklar.

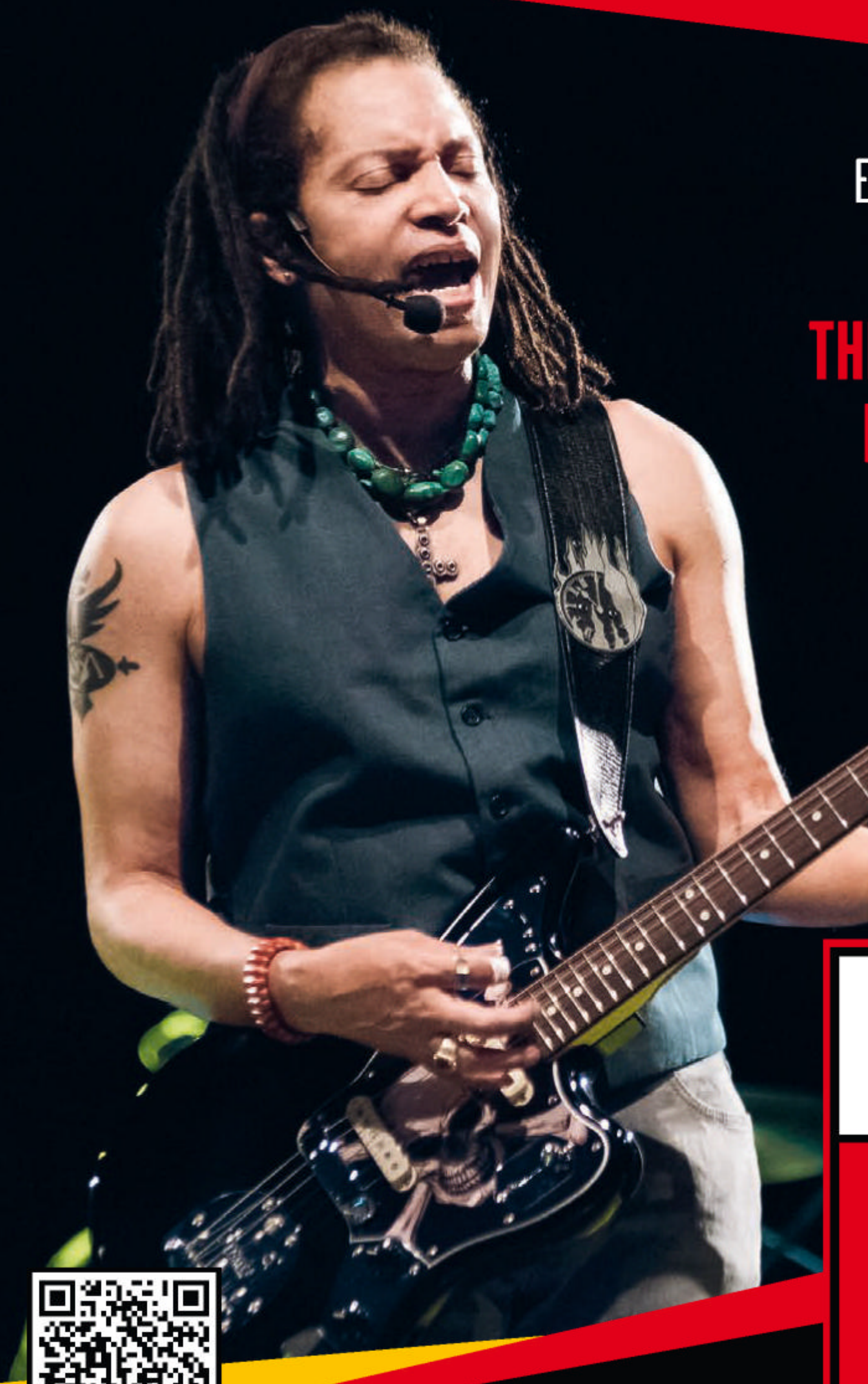
"Rock'n'roll is my religion," smiles Maitreya. "It's my calling and my purpose in life. So, when I get the chance to honour the gods who've come before me, it's my responsibility to pay them back. I started as a drummer, and Ian is a god for drummers."

The album was also a chance for Sananda to soak up Paice's tales of a life in music, as he says: "When I hear stories from the people who've put their time in for rock'n'roll, I'm really moved.

"Ian knew John Bonham from when they were in local Birmingham bands. He told me how John would follow Ian from gig to gig, just as Led Zeppelin were starting out. John was even a roadie for Ian, as he loved Ian's playing so much."

EMBARK ON A SONIC JOURNEY LIKE NEVER BEFORE WITH SANANDA'S ELECTRIFYING NEW ALBUM

REDEFINING MUSICAL BOUNDARIES AND CAPTIVATING LISTENERS WORLDWIDE



Experience the evolution of sound with Sananda Maitreya's

THE PEGASUS PROJECT : PEGASUS & THE SWAN

available on
May 11th 2024

Get it now at Sananda.org | Listen on Apple Music | available at amazon | Listen On Spotify | TIDAL | TreeHouse Publishing .com

THE PEGASUS PROJECT : PEGASUS & THE SWAN A Horse That Flies & A Swan That Never Dies

NEITHER FISH NOR FLESH

TERENCE TRENT D'ARBY

TERENCE TRENT D'ARBY DECLARED 1987'S *INTRODUCING THE HARDLINE...* "THE GREATEST ALBUM SINCE *SGT. PEPPER'S*", BUT HIS 1989 FOLLOW-UP, *NEITHER FISH NOR FLESH*, FARED LESS WELL, PROMPTING LEGENDARY CRITIC CHARLES SHAAR MURRAY TO SUGGEST "TERENCE IS THE WALRUS". HIS BIZARRELY FLAMBOYANT SECOND LP NONETHELESS REWARDS REINVESTIGATION.

WYNDHAM WALLACE

It's a hot summer's night, a couple of months before the release of Terence Trent D'Arby's second album, bombastically titled *Neither Fish Nor Flesh (A Soundtrack Of Love, Faith, Hope & Destruction)*. The preacher man's son, former soldier and boxer – born Terence Trent Howard, known in the 21st Century as Sananda Maitreya – is hosting John Leland from the US-based *Spin* magazine in his plush Knightsbridge house, having earlier driven him to his North London studio to listen to the record. They returned home at 3am, where Leland will stay till breakfast, and the cover star's still holding court while a patient publicist twiddles his thumbs on a nearby sofa.

"What is my destiny? How big is it?" artist asks journalist, if only rhetorically, as his next words confirm. "I'll just have to wait... *You'll* just have to wait and see. My destiny is not something that I can sum up in two pages. I think I know what it is, but some things are better left unsaid. I'm not saying this to take the heat off me, but I think there are a few of us around who will be used for something. Martin Luther King wasn't an accident, Gandhi wasn't an accident, Dylan was not an accident. Dylan was the drum major for a social movement. Those people who are destined to be read about in 2,000 years' time are those that were in the right place at the right time."

It's 1989, and D'Arby – as we shall call him for history's sake for this album – definitely believes he's in the right place at the right time. Indeed, his audacity is Caesarean, up there with "It's only hubris if I fail". To some, such comparisons are rock star braggadocio, to others merely laughable, but it's been forever thus. Early on in his career, he told *NME* that "I am a genius – point fucking blank." On that occasion, the similarly bombastically titled *Introducing The Hardline According To Terence Trent D'Arby* topped charts around the world, going five times platinum in the UK and twice in the US. Who's to say he's wrong now?

D'Arby recorded his second album with four Top 20 UK singles under his belt, including the US No.1 hit, *Wishing Well*, as well as a Grammy and a Brit. Hopes at CBS were high, and the fact that he enjoyed pin-up perfect looks did no harm, while a voice part-Sam Cooke, part-Otis Redding, helped propel him towards superstar status. But D'Arby, typically, was doing his best to raise expectations further. He claimed *To Know Someone Deeply Is To Know Someone Softly* – which combined out of tune piano chords and rubbery bass before ending up like a Commodores tune – had been delivered in a dream by Marvin Gaye, and when he sang, on the frantically funky *You Will Pay Tomorrow*, "I used to rather be dead than humble/ But now I'd rather be dead than proud", it was hard to imagine this was anything other than false modesty.

D'Arby was also unafraid of verbosely belittling his former work, even as he promoted his latest. "I can now see the first album for what it was," he told *The Guardian*'s Adam Sweeting. "It's like if Mozart looked back on his juvenilia, he'd go 'Argh!' where we might go 'Wow!'... That album existed, as far as I'm concerned, purely to set me up for this one."

What *was* this one, though? Leland coyly pronounced it "a showcase of creative

IF *NEITHER FISH NOR FLESH* IS ECCENTRIC, IT'S ADMIRABLY SO, THOUGH FEW WILL GO SO FAR AS ON D'ARBY'S WEBSITE, WHERE IT IS ANOINTED, "THE LAST RECORD BEFORE THE 'DISNEY GENERATION WAS GIVEN POSSESSION OF THE MUSIC – RAW, UNCOMPROMISING, RIVETING... A SEMINAL INFLUENCE ON WHAT WOULD LATER BE RECOGNISED AS 'GRUNGE'."

ambition, with D'Arby's talents doing their best to keep up with his adventurousness," and it certainly was, if not Mozart, then at least adventurous, as opening song *Declaration: Neither Fish Nor Flesh*'s rallying cry insisted: "I will not be defined". But though D'Arby protested, he was frequently flippant – he referred to himself on the sleeve as "The Incredible E.G. O'Reilly" (E-G-O, geddit?!) – others were tiring of his bluster. In an impressive display of backhanded endorsement, *Rolling Stone* dubbed it "his bona fide genius move, a self-produced, self-arranged and self-written musical statement that's just as ambitious, brash and maddening as the boasts he's made in interviews." *NME* concluded, "the mouth has taken over and the music seems secondary."

If his 'daring' was sometimes interpreted as dilettantism, D'Arby had the chops. Indeed, divorced from his often-absurd hyperbole, *Neither Fish Nor Flesh* stands up to scrutiny far better than contemporary coverage might have anticipated. Even *Rolling Stone* conceded: "You can call this album – or Janet Jackson's *Rhythm Nation 1814*, for that matter – pretentious and overblown. But, however tangled their motives may be, D'Arby and Jackson are pushing themselves, taking chances, while most of their peers would be petrified."

D'Arby would have liked this. Inspired as much by Brian Wilson – to whose eponymous 1988 LP he'd contributed backing vocals – as Martin Bernal's controversial *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, he'd also appreciate ?uestLove's more recent argument that the album "reinforced the benefits of maximalist production". Because, if *Neither Fish Nor Flesh* is eccentric, it's admirably so, though few will go so far as on D'Arby's website, where it is anointed "the last record before the 'Disney Generation' was given possession of the music. Raw, vivid, uncompromising, riveting... a seminal influence on what would later be recognised as 'Grunge'."

Nonetheless there's plenty to applaud. *I'll Be Alright* and *I Don't Want to Bring Your Gods Down* are gospel soul showcases and *Roly Poly* playfully mimics Prince's production, while *This Side Of Love* almost predicts The White Stripes and *Billy Don't Fall* is an ode to tolerance, albeit lyrically clumsy. At times, too, the album's almost avant-garde. *I Have Faith In These Desolate Times* pairs his extraordinary falsetto with harp and *It Feels So Good To Love Someone Like You* with sitar, strings and atonal scratches, while *...And I Need to Be With Someone Tonight* closes things with an a cappella performance and what genuinely sounds like a fart.

It stiffed, of course. He insisted on releasing it for Christmas, with no pre-release singles, and to date it's gone gold in the UK, where *Introducing The Hardline...* is five times platinum. D'Arby, naturally, still blames changes at CBS, even telling *Q* in 2001 that their "major breadwinner, who can't be named at this time, made it clear if my second album was promoted, he'd take his business elsewhere."

But, true or not, it clearly deserved better. Ostentatious? Sure. Over-ambitious? Most likely. But fascinating? Perhaps it won't be read about in 2,000 years but, like it or not, *Neither Fish Nor Flesh* is unquestionably meaty. ■

INTO THE GREAT WIDE OPEN

OUR PICK OF THE BEST *CLASSIC POP*-FRIENDLY FESTIVALS TO LOOK OUT FOR THIS YEAR

RATTLER FEST
19–20 APRIL

WHERE Healeys Cornish Cyder Farm, Penhallow, Cornwall
WEBSITE rattler-fest.co.uk

Now into its fourth year, Cornwall's adults-only Rattler Fest 2024 is a two-day event that boasts an array of top musical talent and its own cider on tap.

Hosted at Healeys Cornish Cyder Farm – home of the renowned Rattler Cyder – the opening day will be headlined by pop rockers Scouting For Girls who'll be mining highlights from their hit-packed career including 2023's *The Place We Used To Meet*. Also playing the opening day of the festival are 90s favourites East 17.

Headlining day two is recent *Classic Pop* interviewees The Zutons, now hitting the comeback trail with their new album *The Big Decider*. Look out, too, for kids favourites Dick and Dom who are promising an eccentric DJ set.

Elsewhere on site, revellers can immerse themselves in the Orchard Silent Disco, compete in the comical Mr & Mrs Rattler Competition, brave the whimsical Rattler Olympics or check out the Après Ski Sessions. Tickets start at just £35.

Scouting For Girls

THE GREAT ESTATE
31 MAY–2 JUNE

WHERE Scorrier Estate, Cornwall
WEBSITE greatestatefestival.co.uk

The self-proclaimed "most rambunctious of garden fêtes" returns to Cornwall for its seventh year. Set within the mystical grounds of Scorrier House, this award-winning boutique family festival is keeping the three-day event's line-up as stylistically diverse as ever with its latest trio of headliners.

Now celebrating their 50th anniversary as a band, The Stranglers top the bill on The Great Estate's opening day with their voluminous back catalogue of iconic punk rock songs. Justin Hawkins brings The Darkness to the grounds of Scorrier Estate to round off proceedings on day two – expect headstands on drum risers, outstanding showmanship and even a jumpsuit or two from Brit hard rock's finest.

Sunday's headliners will be Soul II Soul. Led by the inimitable Jazzie B, the legendary UK soundsystem will be bringing the club classics as they delve into highlights from across their ground-breaking career.

Weekend and day tickets with payment plans are now available from the festival's official website.

The Darkness

© Simon Emmett

WIN A FAMILY TICKET TO CAMP BESTIVAL WORTH £1,300!

CAMP BESTIVAL RETURNS TO DORSET AND SHROPSHIRE THIS YEAR – AND *CLASSIC POP* HAS AN INCREDIBLE FAMILY TICKET UP FOR GRABS TO GIVE AWAY TO READERS

Designed by families, for families, the much-loved Camp Bestival combines an all-encompassing festival experience with an action-packed camping holiday.

The Dorset event, which runs from 25-28 July features a UK festival exclusive appearance by Pete Tong's Ibiza Classics – Jules Buckley & The Essential Orchestra. Making her festival debut as a headliner is Paloma Faith and completing the acts at the top of the bill will be McFly.

Elsewhere, this year's line-up includes James Arthur, Orbital, The Darkness and Sophie Ellis-Bextor. 2024 will see a brand new range of free activities joining the all the current favourites, including everything from parkour and freerunning to a football club, wall climbing and dance classes as well as a Space Camp and Planetarium to fit with the event's space exploration theme.

The sister event at Shropshire's Weston Park runs from 15-18 August will see the return of McFly and Paloma Faith as headliners with the addition of the mighty Faithless. Also making the trip from the Dorset event will be The Darkness and Orbital while Rick Astley will be switching things up as a new face on the line-up.

QUESTION

Sister Bliss is a member of which Camp Bestival headliner?

PRIZE

1x Family Ticket (2x adults and up to four children aged 17 and under) to either Camp Bestival Dorset or Shropshire including a Camping Plus pitch in their reserved pitch field.

Closing date: 10 June

TO ENTER, VISIT **CLASSICPOPMAG.COM/ CAMPBESTIVAL2024** OR SCAN THE QR CODE

TERMS & CONDITIONS: Family Ticket is for 2x adults and up to four children (aged 17 and under). Entrants must be 18 and over. Prizes are non-transferable and non-refundable. Prize does not include camping equipment, travel or parking, food or drink. Tickets will be received via e-ticket around a week before the event. ID will be required for wristband collection. Full Camp Bestival T&Cs can be found here: dorset.campbestival.net/tickets/terms-conditions

CHILFEST 2024
5–6 JULY

WHERE **Tring, Hertfordshire**
WEBSITE **chilfest.co.uk**

The much-loved independent family-friendly Hertfordshire festival returns with two days of musical delights split between tribute bands and *Classic Pop* alumni.

Friday gets the party started with Chilfest's "Totally Tribute" Night. Headlined by Take That tribute act Rule The World featuring Dan Budd as Robbie Williams, the five-piece will be joined by acts paying homage to iconic 80s and 90s artists, including I'm Every Whitney, Rogue Minogue, Badness and The Smiths Utd.

Topping the bill on the Saturday is Marc Almond who'll be playing a solo set outside the Soft Cell mothership. Also featuring that day are Heaven 17 (worth the price of admission alone when they play inevitable festival highlight *Temptation*), Go West, Scouting For Girls, Nik Kershaw, and ska legends The Selecter.

Elsewhere on the bill, 90s favourites The Farm, East 17 and Baby D also make must-see appearances on day two.

A range of tickets, including a VIP option, are available from the official website.

Marc Almond

© Michelle Hayward
Morcheeba

PARADHIS
5–7 JULY

WHERE **Boconnoc Estate, Cornwall**
WEBSITE **paradhis.co.uk**

A unique festival experience, Paradhis blends mindfulness, meditation and yoga with an eclectic mix of musical artists amid the beauty of a Cornish sanctuary that's a tonic for your soul.

Set in the natural splendour of the Boconnoc Estate, among the musical highlights this year are trip-hoppers Morcheeba, world music and ambient duo Hang Massive, singer-songwriter Scott Matthews and Afriquoi.

Also key to the vibe of Paradhis – that's Cornish for 'Paradise' for non-speakers – are a diverse range of well-being activities including sound healing, forest bathing, breathwork and yoga. The festival's organisers also promise expert practitioners who will be on hand to offer one-on-one sessions and workshops, saying: "Prepare for a transcendental odyssey at Paradhis, where every note resonates with your inner peace, against the rustic charm of Cornwall's landscape."

The carefully-curated artist line-up features a mix of internationally renowned artists and emerging talent, including indie, folk, electronic and world music.

BACK 2 FESTIVAL
22–25 AUGUST

WHERE **Thoresby Park, Nottinghamshire**
WEBSITE **back2festival.com**

Hosted at Nottinghamshire's picturesque Thoresby Park over the August Bank Holiday weekend, Back 2 Festival is Europe's only four-day nostalgia event celebrating the best music from the 80s, 90s and noughties. And they've certainly bagged some big names for the latest event, including recent *Classic Pop* cover stars Bananarama. Also headlining Back 2 Festival are the newly-reunited Eternal, featuring original members Vernie and Easther Bennett plus new recruit Christel Lakhdar as well as the Kevin Simm-fronted Wet Wet Wet. Other highlights across the four days are boyband Five, Let Loose, Cascada and the Europop fun of Vengaboys. *CP* favourite Martin Kemp takes to the wheels of steel for a special 80s DJ set and we also recommend checking out the cultured Balearic vibes of Symphonic Ibiza Orchestra. A variety of ticket styles are on offer, from day trippers to weekend camping experiences. Luxury glamping packages are available and caravans and motorhomes are welcome at the event.

LITTLE ORCHARD CIDER & MUSIC FESTIVAL
13–15 SEPTEMBER

WHERE **Healeys Cornish Cyder Farm, Penhallow, Cornwall**
WEBSITE **cornwallciderfestival.co.uk**

After the success of its 10th anniversary in 2023, this self-proclaimed "charming Cornish party" returns with another eclectic line-up of artists.

Festival perennials The Levellers and Dub Pistols are among this year's big-hitters as well as Doctor & The Medics. On a poppier tip, national treasure Chesney Hawkes will be a must-see. And no cider festival would be complete without those West Country stalwarts The Wurzels. No doubt the band will be sampling one or two of the 35 different ciders available on site.

The festival also prides itself on showcasing the best in local talent. We'd recommend checking out the pride of St Ives', Bailey Tomkinson.

Not just a treat for the ears and taste buds, the festival also serves up activities including a skate ramp, DJ workshops and the enchanting Orchard Silent Disco. Early Bird tickets are available now from the festival website.

WIN

2x VIP PASSES TO VICTORIOUS FESTIVAL WORTH £750!

THE BEST IN POP, ROCK, INDIE AND DANCE WILL MAKE THEIR WAY TO SOUTHSEA'S SEAFRONT FOR THIS AWARD-WINNING THREE-DAY FESTIVAL

An impressive array of major names are queueing up to play this year's Victorious Festival from 23-25 August – and we have a pair of weekend VIP passes worth more than £750 to give away to readers that will put you right in the heart of the action.

Set on Southsea's picturesque seafront, Victorious Festival is the UK's biggest Metropolitan family-friendly festival and this year's Bank Holiday extravaganza features an array of big-hitters at the award-winning event. Headlining the opening day on Friday 23 August will be Fatboy Slim, who'll be bringing his finest Big Beat vibes to Victorious Festival alongside indie rock favourites Snow Patrol. Also on the diverse bill for the opening day are Idles, Louis Tomlinson, Jess Glynne and Maxïmo Park.

For the Saturday night, Sugababes and Lightning Seeds join the action on a day that also features Courteeners, Pixies and headliner Jamie T.

Meanwhile, Wet Leg make the short skip over the Solent from the Isle of Wight for day three, playing alongside James Bay, Natasha Bedingfield, Arlo Parks, Becky Hill and Biffy Clyro.

Sugababes

Jess Glynne

Wet Leg

QUESTION
Which band will headline the main stage on Sunday 25 August at Victorious Festival 2024?

PRIZE
2x VIP Weekend Passes for 23-25 August.

Closing date: 10 June

TO ENTER, VISIT
CLASSICPOPMAG.COM/ VICTORIOUSFESTIVAL
OR SCAN THE QR CODE

TERMS & CONDITIONS: Prize includes two VIP weekend passes (2x adults) to Victorious Festival for Friday 23 August, Saturday 24 August and Sunday 25 August 2024. Each ticket admits one person. Travel and accommodation (including camping) is not included. The prize is non-refundable and no cash alternative will be offered. The prize is non-transferable and ID will be required at time of collecting the ticket wristband upon arrival. The prize includes all free events and activities at Victorious (subject to availability) but not food and drink from any stalls or bar. Winner chosen at random. For more information on the festival, visit the Victorious Festival website at victoriousfestival.co.uk. The tickets are issued subject to the festival's standard T&Cs, which can be found at www.victoriousfestival.co.uk/victorious-competition-tcs/

POPARAZZI

READERS SHARE THEIR FAVOURITE PHOTOS AS THEY GET UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH SOME OF THE BIGGEST NAMES IN PLANET POP

Send your Poparazzi pics now to **steve.harnell@anthem.co.uk**

ALISON MOYET
WITH EDDIE PATON

"This shot was taken after Alison's amazing show at the Usher Hall in Edinburgh on 5 October 2013 during her tour for *The Minutes* album. Alison was so friendly and we discussed how it had been reported that some audience members had been unhappy she was performing a more electronic set on the tour. I obviously told her she was right to stick to her guns and play what she wanted! I love the smile on her face in this photo – she looks so happy and is glowing. I've gone on to see Alison a further three times since, twice supporting Tears For Fears."

SOPHIE ELLIS-BEXTOR
WITH ADRIAN KEEBLE

"I caught up with Sophie following her performance at Przym in Kingston on 27 June 2023. She's such a lovely person and after the show was giving away signed postcards to everyone. The gig was amazing – a short acoustic set to promote her latest album, *Hana*."

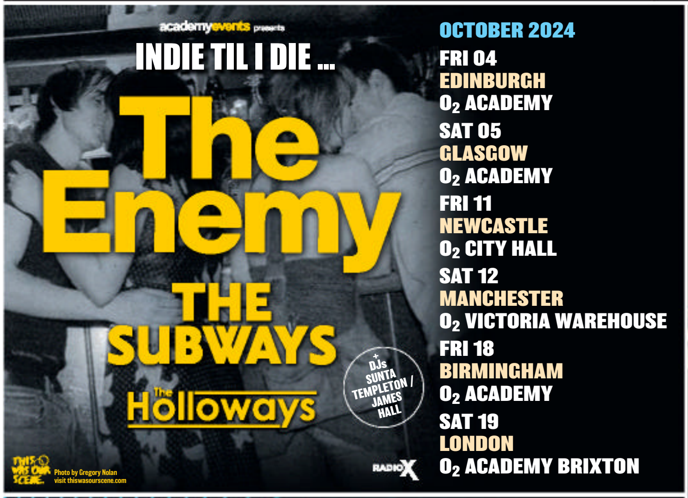
MARTIN FRY
WITH DENNIS McLAIN

"ABC are one of my favourite bands and I met Martin Fry in Orlando when he played the Velvet Sessions at the Hardrock in the mid-2000s. My husband worked there and arranged a private meet-and-greet for me. Martin is one class act, he even insisted that I try on his jacket as you can see..."

ROBIN SCOTT
WITH IAN HARRIS

"I'm pictured here with Robin at Pizza Express near Holborn in London. Robin's daughter Berenice was performing tracks from her Joni Mitchell covers album *A Joni Kind Of Mood*. I'd already met Robin on a few occasions by this point, but that was back in the 1990s before camera phones. This was the first time I'd met Robin and managed to get a selfie with him, too. He was charming and had seen my *Classic Pop* Superfan article and was rather taken aback with my collection! He said that he's hoping to perform live himself in 2024."

Academy Events present



TICKETMASTER.CO.UK

CLASSIC POP TOP TEN

WEEK ENDING 14 MAY 1983

A GALLIC ONE-HIT WONDER, THE GO-GO'S MEET FUN BOY THREE, THE HUMAN LEAGUE FACE OFF WITH HEAVEN 17 AND SPANDAU'S SECRET LOVE SONG!

STEVE O'BRIEN

01 (1) **TRUE**
SPANDAU BALLET
(REFORMATION)

02 (3) **(KEEP FEELING) FASCINATION**
THE HUMAN LEAGUE
(VIRGIN)

TRUE
SPANDAU BALLET
(REFORMATION)

In 1983, most pop fans with the Y chromosome had the hots for Clare Grogan, but with *True* came proof that even pop stars weren't immune to the Altered Images singer's girl-next-door charms. "I was infatuated with Clare Grogan," Spandau Ballet's Gary Kemp revealed to *The Guardian*. "I met her on *Top Of The Pops* and, at one point, travelled up to Scotland to have tea with [Clare] and her mum and dad. Although my feelings were unrequited and the relationship was platonic, it was enough to trigger a song." Musically inspired by the 60s soul discs that Kemp was spinning at time (which explains the lyric "Listening to Marvin all night long"), it's full of little references meant only for Grogan. For his 22nd birthday in 1981, she'd given him a copy of the novel *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov, and many of the lyrics in *True* are culled from the book.

WORDS
F.R DAVID
(CARRERE)

You'd think that the description of one-hit wonder for French singer F.R. David would be a UK-only thing and that he'd be a superstar in his own country. But no, *Words* was David's sole hit even in la France. A No.1 in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, and No.2 in the UK and France, *Words* was spun from the singer's debut long-player, released earlier in 1982. Though it was David's first (and only) hit, he had played with Vangelis on some of the composer's early albums and was a member of French rock band Les Variations, appearing on their final LP *Café De Paris* in 1975. His debut album, also titled *Words*, would peak at No.46 in the UK.

(KEEP FEELING) FASCINATION
THE HUMAN LEAGUE
(VIRGIN)

Peaking at No.2 here in the UK (criminally, The Human League have only ever had *one* chart-topper), *(Keep Feeling) Fascination* was a non-album single that would later be added to the band's 1983 EP *Fascination!*. Written by Jo Callis and Philip Oakey, it would be the last Human League song to be produced by Martin Rushent (who'd overseen *Don't You Want Me* and others) for seven years. The song features vocals from four band members – lead singer Oakey, co-vocalists Susan Ann Sulley and Joanne Catherall, and a rare vocal turn from keyboardist and guitarist Callis. Regarded by the band as more of a dance number it was classified 'Red' on the League's labelling system of 'Blue' for pop songs and 'Red' for dance tracks.

TEMPTATION
HEAVEN 17
(VIRGIN)

Martyn Ware and Ian Craig Marsh found themselves going head to head with their old band, The Human League, in the spring of 1983 when *Temptation* went mano a mano with *(Keep Feeling) Fascination* (both peaked in the UK at No.2). The first satellite from their sophomore album, *The Luxury Gap* (*Let Me Go*) had just missed the Top 40), *Temptation* came about when Ware woke from a sleep with a sudden impulse to write a song about sex. "So, the song is about rising sexual tension," he told Radio 2 years later. "It has chords that keep going up like an Escher staircase and in the end there's this big release." One of the band's signature numbers, it enjoyed an afterlife 13 years later when it was included on the soundtrack of 1996's buzziest movie, *Trainspotting*, while in 2007 it was covered by Jarvis Cocker and Beth Ditto at that year's NME Awards.

03 (8) **TEMPTATION**
HEAVEN 17
(VIRGIN)

04 (2) **WORDS**
F.R. DAVID
(CARRERE)

05 (6) **DANCING TIGHT**
GALAXY FT PHIL FEARON
(ENSIGN)

06 (5) **PALE SHELTER**
TEARS FOR FEARS
(MERCURY)

07 (30) **CANDY GIRL**
NEW EDITION
(LONDON)

08 (7) **WE ARE DETECTIVE**
THOMPSON TWINS
(ARISTA)

09 (16) **OUR LIPS ARE SEALED**
FUN BOY THREE
(CHRYSALIS)

10 (29) **CAN'T GET USED TO LOSING YOU**
THE BEAT
(GO FEET)

DANCING TIGHT GALAXY FT PHIL FEARON (ENSIGN)

When it comes to 80s pop-soul-dance outfits, it's Shalamar, Kid Creole & The Coconuts and Modern Romance who nab all the headspace. Galaxy, then, are one of the more forgettable acts, having had just one Top 5 hit with this likeable, if throwaway dance number. Founder Phil Fearon first enjoyed success as part of Kandidate, whose single *I Don't Wanna Lose You* made No.11 in 1979. Galaxy fared better with *Dancing Tight*, but success wouldn't last (follow-up *Wait Until Tonight (My Love)* peaked at No.20 and *Fantasy Real* at No.41). Fast fact – Phil's daughter Stephanie Fearon featured in the 2010 BBC show *Over The Rainbow*, in which Andrew Lloyd Webber searched for an actress to play Dorothy in his stage adaptation of *The Wonderful Wizard Of Oz*. She came fourth.

CANDY GIRL NEW EDITION (LONDON)

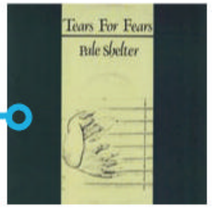
The absolute epitome of 1980s bubblegum pop, *Candy Girl* was, amazingly, a much bigger hit in the UK than it was in New Edition's American homeland. Charting at No.1 over here and No.46 over there, it was composed by the band's mentor Maurice Starr, the man later responsible for giving us New Kids On The Block. New Edition were originally formed by Bobby Brown who, of course, went on to become one of the pioneers of new jack swing, while also making headlines in 1992 when he wed Whitney Houston. Though New Edition split in 1990, they've reformed several times since and are still performing today. However, it's been 20 years since their last album of original material.

OUR LIPS ARE SEALED FUN BOY THREE (CHRYSALIS)

Both The Go-Go's *and* Fun Boy Three had hits with this one, which is as it should be as it was a co-write between both bands, specifically Jane Wiedlin and Terry Hall and reportedly about the pair's all-too-brief romance. This version by Hall's first band after The Specials is certainly the gloomier of the two versions, but that didn't stop it from peaking at No.7 here in the UK.

CAN'T GET USED TO LOSING YOU THE BEAT (GO FEET)

Originally made famous by Andy Williams in 1963, this Jerome 'Doc' Pomus and Mort Shuman-penned pop nugget was given a reggae makeover by The Beat, netting the Birmingham outfit a No.3 hit in 1983. It had originally been recorded three years before for the group's debut album, *I Just Can't Stop It*.



PALE SHELTER TEARS FOR FEARS (MERCURY)

Originally released in 1982, the first recording of *Pale Shelter* – then titled *Pale Shelter (You Don't Give Me Love)* – stiffed commercially. It was only when Roland Orzabal and Curt Smith re-recorded it (with producers Chris Hughes and Ross Cullum) for their debut album *The Hurting* that it truly came alive, netting the Bathonians a Top 5 smash. Two years later, Mercury reissued the original Mike Howlett-produced version, complete with a new variation of the original picture sleeve. Featuring the same tracklisting as the original '82 release, the single was a modest success, peaking at No.73. And 31 years on from that, Canadian artist The Weeknd would sample the song on his No.47-charting *Secrets*.

WE ARE DETECTIVE THOMPSON TWINS (ARISTA)

Peaking at No.7, *We Are Detective* was the highest-charting single up to this point from Tom Bailey, Alannah Currie and Joe Leeway. The third 45 from the band's third studio album *Quick Step & Side Kick*, it's a song bursting with film noir imagery ("We saw him smoking by the newspaper stand/ There's something odd about his gloved left hand/ Saw him again inside the old cafe/ He makes us tense we wish he'd go away"), wrapped in gloriously punchy synths. A limited number of copies of the 12" came with a free 12" of the tracks *Love Lies Fierce* and *Frozen In Time*, remixes of the songs *Love Lies Bleeding* and *Kamikaze* respectively from the *Quick Step*... album.

BANDS WON'T PLAY NO MORE

IN THIS EXTRACT FROM HIS BOOK *TOO MUCH TOO YOUNG – THE 2 TONE RECORDS STORY*, DANIEL RACHEL TRACES THE STORY OF THE SPECIALS' SEMINAL NO.1 SINGLE *GHOST TOWN*

Far had we travelled. The distance between 1979 and 1981 was immense. Gone were the last vestiges of punk and do-it-yourself typescript, and in came the Sinclair ZX81 home computer and the high-speed Advanced Passenger Train. It was the year of the inaugural London Marathon and, for horticulturists, the opportunity to shop at the first garden superstore, Homebase. Bucks Fizz won the Eurovision Song Contest and New Romanticism broke out from the clubs of Birmingham and London.

Suddenly the chart was awash with the synthesizer, with Soft Cell, Ultravox and the Human League, fronted by a singer with an asymmetric haircut and two backing vocalists plucked from the dancefloor of a Sheffield nightclub. Dandyism and bold make-up were all the rage as 1981 handed itself to Adam & The Ants and Aneka's *Japanese Boy*.

The new colourful pop world provided an escape from a country deeply divided by record unemployment, now at three million. They had a name: Maggie's millions. One in 10 of the British workforce was out of work. In Coventry, the rate was 20 per cent. An oppressive climate of social and economic unrest pervaded as the effects of monetarism seemingly favoured the 'haves' over the 'have-nots'.

"Thatcher was putting more air in ice-cream and taking out the fucking cream," thunders Chas Smash. "There was nothing left in there but a load of fluff. They turned the lights off. Surely, the purpose of life is to feel better, to express oneself better, to live better in harmony. If profit isn't giving something to everyone then not everyone can get what they should be getting. It was inherently wrong."

In The Specials' camp, a self-imposed six-month sabbatical had done little to revive the deflated septet. "Working in music totally divorces you from what life's all about," opined John Bradbury in the *New Musical Express*, suggesting that he was considering working on a building site for a few weeks. "You know why: because amongst blokes working on sites you really find out what's going on and you don't get any bullshit and you do get real communication."

But then, against all expectation, Jerry Dammers pulled out of the bag one

© Getty

The Specials in New York, 1980, the year they hit UK No.1 with *Too Much Too Young* (*The Special AKA Live!* EP)

of the greatest end games in rock'n'roll history. He named it *Ghost Town*. Its arrival came when relations between The Specials were at an all-time low. "People weren't happy," says Jerry. "But nobody would explain to me what the problem was. If they had grievances, they didn't tell me." Convinced of "plotting and scheming" behind the scenes, Jerry says the bad vibes got "quite nasty". Channelling his frustration from a state of "complete depression", Jerry wrote *Ghost Town*. "It was about disillusionment with rock'n'roll and the alienation and paranoia that success brings: all the demands people make on you, they become very frightening, ghost-like figures."

Written on a Yamaha home organ bought from a factory showroom in Milton Keynes, Jerry recalls walking in on a Japanese salesman holding a class on keyboard technique. Sitting at the back of the room and increasingly feeling agitated, he started playing one of the instruments on show and inadvertently disrupted the session. Making a hasty purchase, he spent the following months experimenting with the organ's pre-recorded rhythms and built-in woodwind settings. Daringly switching between flat and minor notes – using "weird Japanese fake clarinet sounds" – Jerry created a haunting melody with a distinct Eastern feel.

Acknowledging that the riff was common to Prince Buster and "embarrassingly" the organ solo in *In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida* by Iron Butterfly, Jerry elucidated "the little motif denotes Arabic snake charmers. Musically, I wanted an atmosphere of seedy, decaying poverty, but on an international scale, with schmaltzy Latin Muzak chord changes and an Eastern flavour, which, in my mind, conjured up the idea of the Third World rising up."

Ghost Town's iconic skeleton sleeve image was discovered in Barnaby's picture library in Oxford Street

Revolving around a repeating verse, Jerry's creativity faltered: "I spent a year trying to find the third chord. I was going crazy. Eventually I just gave up and stayed on the E major. That was eureka!"

Reflecting on the steadily deteriorating social conditions in Britain – and taking its title from a Nips song – Jerry sat in the studio with a pen and an exercise book and summoned images of inner-city anger and alienation. "Once I got the idea, the lyrics came pretty quickly." Describing Coventry as a boom town, *Ghost Town* interconnected a multitude of once-prosperous industrial towns and cities now in rapid decline. Shocked by the extremes of poverty and the impact unemployment was having on towns in northern England and Scotland, Jerry conveyed his view of touring in 1980. "In Liverpool all the shops had cast-iron shutters, and in Glasgow, there were these little old ladies on the streets selling all their household goods, their cups and saucers. It was unbelievable. It was clear that something was very, very wrong. You could see the anger and frustration in the audience. The country was falling apart."

Infused with a mood of dread and decay, *Ghost Town* was an attempt to link personal feelings to the political situation. "It was about the state of the nation," says Jerry, "and the state of The Specials."

Shortly after reconvening for rehearsals in Coventry, relations within The Specials spiralled. "People weren't co-operating," says Jerry, who on more than one occasion stormed out virtually in tears. Adding to the brooding mood, bass player Horace Panter had recently discovered a path to personal enlightenment and transformation through the self-religious group Exegesis. "I was full of it and self-assertion," he says, "It must have been hell for Jerry." Citing his conversion as a "contributing factor" in the group's decline, Horace told *The Guardian* in 2002 that "everybody was stood in different parts of the room with their equipment, no one talking. It was a nightmare. I just felt like I was being sucked into a black hole of depression."

Desperate to mollify a rapidly disintegrating situation, salvation came from an unexpected source. Listening to *Roundtable* in March 1981, Jerry found himself enamoured by a new release by Victor Romero Evans called *At The Club*. Discovering that the song had been recorded in the front room of a flat in Tottenham, Jerry contacted the record's producer. "It must have been one o'clock in the morning when the phone rang and got me out of bed," John Collins told *Sound On Sound* in 2011.

"A tired-sounding voice said, 'This is Jerry of The Specials. I've heard your record. Will you produce us?' I thought it must be a joke. I said, 'Do you know what time it is?' So he apologised and said he'd call me back the next day, which he did."

It transpired that several months earlier, Collins had in fact sent a tape to 2 Tone. "It was going to be released," recalled Terry Hall, "but like quite a lot of tapes, it just didn't happen." Undeterred, Collins travelled to Coventry to meet the group during rehearsals at the General Wolfe on the Foleshill Road. Surprised to discover that he was white, Lynval and Neville later told Collins over a pint: "We were expecting someone like Lee Perry: a wild Rasta smoking ganja."

Contracts signed – two points and an advance of £1,500. "A good deal for an unknown producer," says Collins. Studio time was booked at Woodbine in Leamington Spa. Having previously worked on 24-track, Jerry had taken the unusual decision to revert to eight-track to impose discipline and encourage decision-making at every stage of the recording. For Collins, who to this point was used to working on four-track, the upgrade was "a luxury". Informed by Rick Rogers that he had unlimited time in the studio, sessions commenced on Friday 3 April and continued through to Thursday of the following week.

> **"Everybody was stood in different parts of the room with their equipment, no one talking. It was a nightmare."**
> HORACE PANTER

To this point without words, Collins said as an instrumental *Ghost Town* had "a good groove but the intro and ending still hadn't been worked out." Opting to layer one instrument at a time, Collins asked John Bradbury to set up a simple kit of bass drum, snare and hi-hat – like a human drum machine – and bass player Horace Panter to plug directly into the mixer. "I tried to simplify it and make it more like a Sly & Robbie-sounding record," says Collins, referencing the revered Jamaican rhythm section and production duo. Instructing Bradbury to omit drum rolls, Collins emphasised the song's heavy dub groove in stark contrast to the energetic sound of previous 2 Tone releases. Terry Hall would later comment that using Collins gave The Specials "something fresh", adding ruefully, "That's what we needed." But as more ganja was smoked and drink consumed a mood of paranoia set in. Attempting to overdub a two-handed organ shuffle, Jerry became frustrated, convinced that the track was slowing down. 'I'll get a stopwatch,' suggested engineer John Rivers before declaring that the tempo "was solid". "It nearly all ended there," lamented Collins. "John saved the day!"

Worse still, Jerry was playing an unpopular C minor diminished chord, known in the Middle Ages as 'the devil's interval'. Lynval Golding rushed into the control room. "NO! NO! NO!" the guitarist screamed "IT SOUNDS WRONG! WRONG! WRONG! WRONG! WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?"

Convinced that the chord sequence ill-fitted the song and furthermore sounded disjointed, Lynval was horrified when Jerry shared his idea for Arabic wailing. "It didn't make any sense to me," he admits. "I said, 'I can't hear what the melody is. It sounds horrible'." The 'Arabic wailing' referred to a vocal chant intended for the middle passage. Attempting to describe the idea, John Rivers recalls "everyone thought Jerry'd finally gone mad."

But if deciphering a musical visionary was problem enough, the collapse of Roddy and Jerry's working relationship

Too much fighting: The Specials (L-R) Roddy Radiation, Horace Panter, Terry Hall, Neville Staples, John Bradbury, Lynval Golding and Jerry Dammers

© United Archives GmbH / Alamy Stock Photo

sent the session into freefall. Refusing to be shown how to play the diminished chord and indeed the song structure, Roddy resolutely played only what he thought sounded right. Angry and fuelled by drink, the guitarist compared the experience to military stalemate. "The Specials was like the Spanish Civil War by that time," he promulgated to *Uncut* magazine. "If we were confronted by fascists like the National Front, we pulled together. Otherwise, we formed our own factions."

Resistant to Jerry's alleged dictatorial approach, Roddy resorted to kicking holes in the control room wall. "That's right, Roddy," piped up Terry, "if you don't understand it, kick it!" Accounting for his increasing belligerent behaviour, Roddy reasons, "I was trying to come up with something to play and Jerry was like, 'No, I don't want you to play that. I want you to play this'. I was like, 'Jawohl, mein führer', and somehow got it together to play what he wanted me to. It was a bloody nightmare. I was almost suicidal, close to cutting my wrists. There was a nice little pub down the road. I used to go there, get totally off my head, and then stagger back and try and play guitar."

"The band had reached a point where they didn't seem to want to take my advice anymore. It all got very unpleasant."
JERRY DAMMERS

At his wits' end, Jerry declared, "It's him [Roddy] or me." "He was crazy," says Jerry, mindful of the guitar player's unpredictable manner during the recording of their previous album. Putting it to the band that Roddy "has to go", Jerry says, "Everyone more or less agreed, except Brad. And then…" he adds in a tone of disbelief, "Neville turned on me."

Full of energy and charisma on stage, Stella Barker says of her then boyfriend, "Neville was a loose cannon off stage. He smoked a lot of weed and was unpredictable. You didn't know how he was going to be when he walked into a room." In the strained studio atmosphere, Neville insisted on toasting on the record and, in Jerry's words, "adding his own little bits… I was going, 'Look, I don't want you to toast on this particular song'."

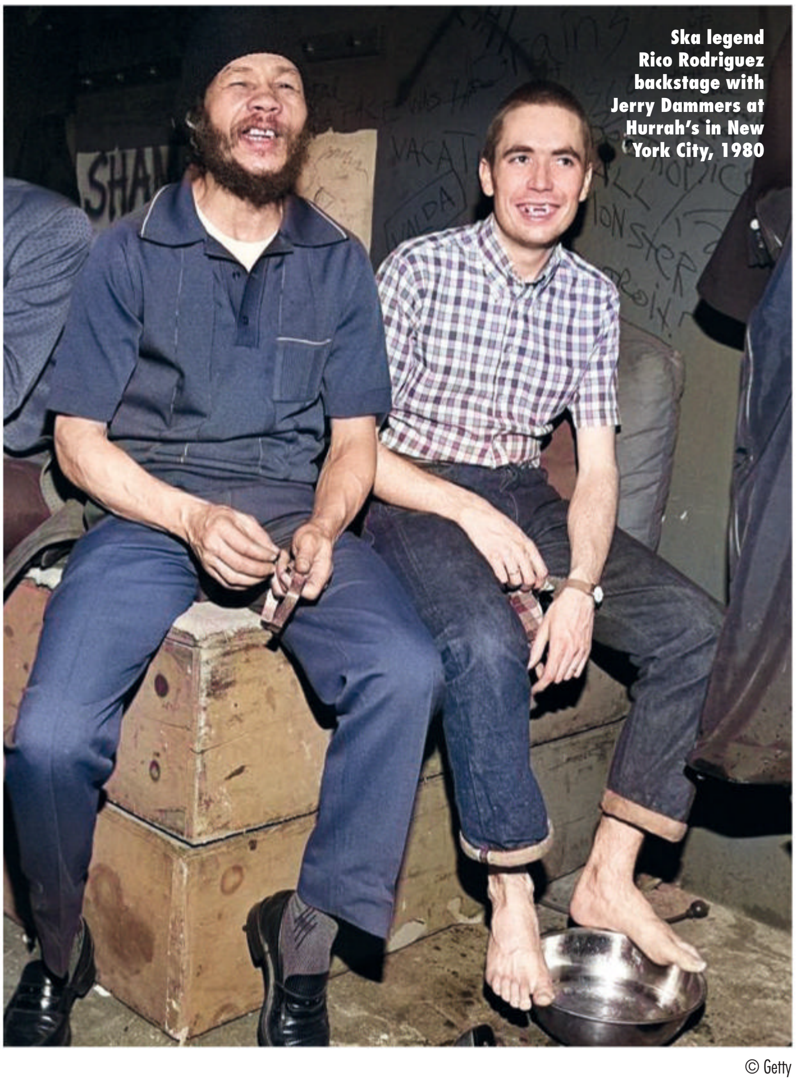
Exasperated, Jerry walked out. "It was really difficult to get certain people to co-operate. They'd reached a point where they didn't seem to want to take my advice anymore. It all got very unpleasant. The band turned against my creative leadership, which was exhausting."

Such was the animosity that John Rivers threatened to terminate the session. "No! No!" Jerry pleaded. "This is the greatest record that's ever been made in the history of anything! You can't stop now!"

Persuaded to complete the track, attention turned to Rico and an extended trombone passage dramatically stretching the song past the six-minute count. "I think I did everything in that solo," Rico told the BBC in 2012. "It was talking about suffering. It was talking about goodness. It speaks for all those who cannot speak, and I had the opportunity to be there because I knew oppression very well."

The final ingredient in the recording was a flute, as Paul Heskett explains: "Almost as an afterthought, Jerry said, 'No offence, I don't like saxophone or at least the way you play it. Do you play anything else?'" Stung by the criticism, Heskett nevertheless suggested a woodwind part. Set up in the hallway with a microphone at the top of the stairs to absorb natural reverb from the stairwell, Heskett recorded over a guide organ part with the riff taken from the second part of the C harmonic minor scale. "I heard it once and then had to go straight in and record," complains Heskett. "I had to put a piece of tissue under my chin because sweat was dripping off my face."

Amid the pervasive rancour and growing mistrust, The Specials surprisingly recorded two more songs at Woodbine. *Friday Night, Saturday Morning* recounted Terry's misspent youth drinking and fighting in a poetic litany of flashing lights, hen parties and drunken stags, comically ending in a taxi queue standing in vomit, wishing he had lipstick on his shirt instead of piss stains on [his] shoes. "I was saying, what's the point in me going out and doing all of that?" Terry explained to the *NME* in 1982. "That's what I used to do every weekend. I was always getting turfed out of clubs and chased and beaten up. Then I got to twenty-one and began to think, 'Fuck it. I don't want to get beaten up anymore'. It's a mundane song about a mundane lifestyle."


Ska legend Rico Rodriguez backstage with Jerry Dammers at Hurrah's in New York City, 1980

© Getty

© Pictorial Press Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo

Inspiration for *Ghost Town* came while on tour in the UK to promote 1980's *More Specials* LP

Although solely credited to Terry Hall, the song's backing track dated back to a film Jerry made while studying animation at Lanchester Polytechnic, as he explained in an accompanying pamphlet when the short – Far Gosford Street – was shown at a 2 Tone exhibition in 2021. "The main soundtrack was recorded on the art college's new EMS suitcase synthesizer and eventually became the musical basis of the verses in *Friday Night, Saturday Morning* – but with the three semitone figures played upside down." Supported by a double-tracked vocal and, as Horace recalls, chorus lyrics written by Jerry, its author dismissed the arrangement as a compromise to accommodate the band. Imagining a simpler approach, Terry suggested recording the song with just piano and vocals "as if it were being sung by a bloke in pub."

Expressing similar dissatisfaction, Lynval says the production of the second track, *Why?*, was lousy. Having recorded a demo of the song at TW Studio with producer Dave Jordan, Lynval says: "Jerry wasn't on the original recording so we had to re-do it. The whole feel of the music was the way I did it first. Things really got to a head but we had to do it Jerry's way. He never understood how I feel the song."

Written in response to the racist attack he suffered outside the Moonlight Club a year earlier, Lynval says the idea of *Why?* came to him on a train journey between Birmingham and Gloucester. Conjuring the spirit of Burning Spear, he began humming a melody and writing down lyrical ideas: "Why did you try to hurt me, tell me why... did you really want to kill me?" Singling out the British Movement, the Ku Klux Klan and the National Front for cowardly behaviour and hiding behind police protection too scared to make a speech, Lynval castigated racist supporters who "follow like sheep in a wolf's clothes". Although cut from the final version, Neville Staple backed the song's call for racial unity and a wish to live in peace by calling to men

© Getty

Ghost Town **spent three weeks at No.1 in the UK and was made 1981's Single Of The Year by** ***NME, Melody Maker*** **and** ***Sounds***

of all creeds and colours – Irish man, Welsh man, Indian man, Jamaican, Canadian, Iranian, Nigerian and Cuban man – in an extended celebration of immigrant diversity.

Mixing the three-track EP over three days in London, John Collins added ghostly sound effects (played on a Transcendent 2000 synthesizer) to the lead track, additional harmonies and a 16-line rap written by Terry describing a waiter in a curry house who is racially abused for not serving a chapati with the main course.

"It was too busy and broke the mood," says Collins, taking the executive decision to expunge the extraneous narrative.

To complete the *Ghost Town* package, assistant art director David Storey and John Sims rummaged through an assortment of boxes marked 'ghosts', 'towns', 'poverty and hardship' in an upstairs room of Barnaby's, a picture library housed behind a Georgian shop front just off Oxford Street. When Storey discovered a postcard of two skeletons – one upright at a piano and the other slumped on a chair beside it – Jerry immediately interpreted the image as himself and Terry.

All that remained was to commission Barney Bubbles, whose extensive resume included Madness' schoolyard classic *Baggy Trousers*, to direct a promotional video.

When Storey discovered a postcard of two skeletons, Jerry interpreted the image as himself and Terry

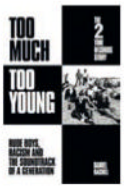
The result was an iconic film with the band driving around a deserted City of London in a vintage 1962 Vauxhall Cresta attired in zoot suits and double-breasted jackets.

"As dawn broke, we wound up on the banks of the Thames just east of Tower Bridge," recalls Chalkie Davies. Wide-eyed and speeding, "The band walked to the edge of the water and started throwing stones into the river. I grabbed about three frames before they dispersed and moved away from each other."

It was a symbolic moment: not only did it represent the detaching of relationships within the group, but it was also the last official shot of The Specials. Making the record had been very stressful, says Lynval Golding: "We were all on different levels. It wasn't a together band."

Matters intensified when Chrysalis refused to issue *Ghost Town* as the group's next single. "I got a call from Roy Eldridge," reveals Chris Poole. "He said, 'We've got a battle on our hands. Chris [Wright] doesn't want to release it."' Convinced the song was "too political" and critical of the government, Wright argued that it would never be a hit. Underlying his concerns, Poole suggests, "Wright wanted a gong."

When *Ghost Town* was sanctioned for release on 12 June, Radio 1 refused to add it to the daytime playlist. Half a million sales later, and the song widely lauded as one of the greatest singles ever made, Chrysalis' fears and the BBC's lack of judgement had the distinct air of humiliation.



● ***Too Much Too Young: The 2 Tone Records Story*** **is published by White Rabbit and available from all good bookshops**

TEACH YRSELF WAH! - A BEST OF

20 Tracks and Hand-Picked by **Pete Wylie**

Featuring The Biggest Hits
Rarities and Unreleased Versions
Including **The Story of The Blues, Sinful, Come Home, Better Scream and Seven Minutes To Midnight!**

Newly Remastered at AIR Mastering

2LP 180gm Vinyl / 1CD / DIGITAL

Cover Portrait by Pete Townshend

OUT NOW!

Chrysalis CATALOGUE

HOW **THE WATERBOYS** MADE **THIS IS THE SEA** AND SAW **THE WHOLE OF THE MOON**

1985 [Standard Edition]
6CD Box Set / 56 Page Booklet

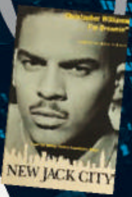
95 track (64 previously unreleased)
Telling the story of the making
of **THIS IS THE SEA**
across demos, outtakes, live recordings
and tv/radio sessions and the
remastered version of the album

THIS IS THE SEA
Remastered Version
of the album on
Limited Edition
180gm Clear Vinyl

Chrysalis CATALOGUE

OUT NOW

New Jack Swing



THE URBAN SOUND THAT FUSED FUNK AND SOUL WITH HIP-HOP AND JAZZ TO REVOLUTIONISE AMERICAN R&B

STEVE O'BRIEN

© Getty

Blackstreet, featuring producer and songwriter Teddy Riley (second from right) pose for a portrait session in 1997

What is it?

Few genres epitomise early-90s US pop as much as new jack swing. Also recognised as swingbeat, it emerged towards the end of the 80s and was a delectable stir-fry of soul, jazz, hip-hop and contemporary R&B. Sonically, it was the newly available SP1200 and 808 drum machines, married to classic funk and soul samples and hip-hop beats that defined its crisp, synthesized sound. If your common or garden soul was the soundtrack to the bedroom or the lounge bar, new jack swing had the street smarts, providing the grit in the R&B oyster.

It was music critic Barry Michael Cooper who birthed the term. As a writer for New York City's *The Village Voice* magazine, he'd been sent to Harlem's legendary Apollo Theater to interview the then 20-year-old (and future Grammy winner) Teddy Riley about a new sound the young producer had been credited as inventing. He titled the article 'Teddy Riley's New Jack Swing: Harlem Gangsters Raise A Genius', giving this heady hybrid of R&B and rap a figurehead as well as a name.

"I had this dream of seeing James Brown and Michael Jackson do a song together," Riley said of the genre's origins when interviewed at the Red Bull Music Academy Festival in New York. "I had a dream of mixing groups together that I wanted to hear. I made the dream come true by taking their music… the essence of their music and what I was inspired by."

New jack swing would usher in artists such as Al B Sure!, Bell Biv DeVoe and En Vogue, and breathed fresh life into singers such as Janet Jackson and Bobby Brown. Even Janet's brother Michael would flirt with this hip new sound on the *Dangerous* album, co-produced by Teddy Riley. While new jack swing would give way to hip-hop, soul and neo-soul in the late 90s, it's had the odd renaissance in the decades since, notably on Bruno Mars' 2016 LP *24K Magic*, with his single *Finesse* as definitively NJS as anything from the genre's swaggering, chart-conquering heyday.

What they say

"New jack swing is a technology of music, which is putting rap and singing together…taking different musics and fusing them all together. I was always in church, so I also had to have that church feel in my music. And that's what kept everyone on the dancefloor."

TEDDY RILEY (TIMELINE.CARNEGIEHALL.ORG)

"Hip-hop and R&B were in two separate spheres, two separate universes. It was a thing where we just wanted to take the music that we loved from the streets and hear our favourite R&B records mixed with it."

HANK SHOCKLEE, AS TOLD TO RED BULL ACADEMY

"[New jack swing] paved the way for 90s soul, where the dividing line between rap and R&B was frequently indistinguishable."

ALLMUSIC

"Teddy Riley repopulated the Black music scene just himself as a producer, then other people started to try to bite on the sound. Literally, if you heard 15 songs [on the radio], almost all those 15 songs were produced by Teddy. New jack swing was almost literally a one-man phenomenon."

PRINCE CHARLES ALEXANDER, AS TOLD TO RED BULL ACADEMY

Essential albums

BOBBY BROWN
DON'T BE CRUEL

Dedicated to the former New Edition singer's best friend James 'Jimbo' Flint who was stabbed to death when Brown was just 11, this 1988 album was helmed by some of the then-hottest producers in the biz, including Jam & Lewis, Babyface and Teddy Riley. Where Brown's debut LP, *King Of Stage*, only made No.88 in the US, this more confident sophomore effort would top the Billboard charts, while all five of its singles would go Top 10 in the States.

JANET JACKSON
RHYTHM NATION 1814

Janet conceived of her follow-up to *Control* as a gritty concept album that would explore racism, drug abuse and poverty in contemporary America. And with these new street-level concerns, came a new urban sound, courtesy of Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis. One of the most influential albums of the 90s, it did more than any other LP to help popularise new jack swing, shifting an estimated 12 million copies worldwide.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
NEW JACK CITY OST

New Jack City was a 1991 crime drama starring Wesley Snipes, Ice-T and a young Chris Rock, telling the story of a New York City drug lord during America's crack epidemic. As befitting the movie's title, the soundtrack album works almost as a new jack swing best of, with tracks from, among others, Keith Sweat, Color Me Badd, Johnny Gill and Teddy Riley's swingbeat outfit Guy.

EN VOGUE
BORN TO SING

One of the defining female groups of the 90s, En Vogue's 1990 debut may not have charted as high as their following long-players (it just missed the Top 20), but with the sex-fuelled *Hold On*, the group secured one of their biggest hits and a new jack swing classic. Named Best R&B/Soul Album at the 1991 Soul Train Music Awards, it's an LP that's absolutely of its moment and one of the swingbeat greats.

Essential figures

TEDDY RILEY

Often called the father of new jack swing, Edward Theodore Riley had begun his music career at 17, producing Doug E. Fresh And The Get Fresh Crew's song *The Show*, before taking the helm for rapper Kool Moe Dee's 1986 single *Go See The Doctor*. Alongside his production career, Riley also found time to form an R&B band, Guy, scoring a No.27 placing in 1988 with their eponymous debut album. A child prodigy (Teddy was playing the guitar and trumpet at five and the piano at eight), he was, by the dawn of the 1990s, one of the most in-demand producers in America, even co-producing Michael Jackson's *Dangerous* album, on the recommendation of Quincy Jones.

Riley formed a new group, Blackstreet, in 1991, and enjoyed hits with the singles *Before I Let You Go* (US No.7), *No Diggity* (US No.1) and *Take Me There* (US No.14). He also worked with Mel B on several tracks for her debut album *Hot*, released in 2000, and produced and co-wrote the song *Teeth* with Lady Gaga in 2009.

Recently, he announced that he's to release an autobiography, provisionally titled *Remember The Times*. "I successfully created the new jack swing genre 40 years ago so we could have our own generation of music, not their generation, and our own history," Riley said in a statement. "I'm so excited to share that history with my fans around the world."

JIMMY JAM & TERRY LEWIS

Classic Pop award-winners Jam & Lewis had hinted at the new jack swing sound with Janet Jackson's 1986 album, *Control*, refining it with her US No.1-charting 1989 follow-up, *Rhythm Nation 1814*. Though their names are forever linked with Janet, these two titans of American pop have also worked with, among others, Alexander O'Neal, George Michael, Michael Jackson, Aretha Franklin, Boyz II Men, Usher and

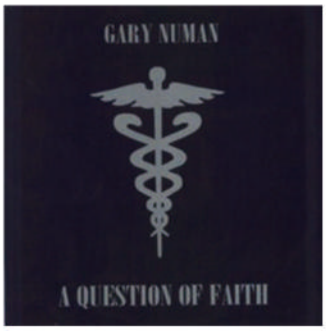
even The Human League. During their four-decade-long career, they've scooped five Grammys, 16 US No.1s and more than 100 Platinum certifications, while in 2022, they were inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in the Musical Excellence category. Respect. ■

TOP 20 COMEBACK SINGLES

GREAT COMEBACKS AREN'T JUST RESERVED FOR SPORTING HEROES, THEY'RE ALSO THE STUFF OF LEGEND IN THE POP MUSIC WORLD

BARRY PAGE

Music history reveals that even the most popular and revered of acts endured a period of commercial decline before getting their careers back on track, and there are plenty of examples of a return to form in our latest countdown. Additionally, we've focused on acts who returned after a lengthy break, as well as those who successfully overcame tragedy or a change in personnel. Many readers will correctly observe that some of the artists and bands in our list never went away, but it's fair to say that some of these acts' careers had creatively and commercially stagnated, before they bounced back with a special record that rekindled their fortunes...



20

GARY NUMAN
A QUESTION OF FAITH (1994)

Gary Numan's career hit rock bottom in 1992 with *Machine + Soul*, an LP of pop-funk workouts that tested the patience of even devoted Numanoids. His fortunes changed after fan and future wife Gemma O'Neill encouraged a direction change. Inspired by Depeche Mode's *Songs Of Faith And Devotion*, he adopted a more industrial sound. Numan then emerged with *Sacrifice*, its dark soundscapes typified by lead single *A Question Of Faith*. Though not a hit, it marked the beginning of his renaissance.

19

SPARKS
WHEN DO I GET TO SING 'MY WAY'? (1994)

The charts weren't big enough for Ron and Russell Mael in the 80s, and after a slew of identikit synth-pop releases failed to connect with the MTV generation, their fortunes declined further when director Tim Burton passed on their musical adaptation of manga series *Mai, The Psychic Girl*. Embracing contemporary dance, they came back fighting with the European hit *When Do I Get To Sing 'My Way'?*, which ruminated on their fading star with customary Mael wit. Thirty years on, they're still doing it their way.

18

ULTRAVOX
BRILL!ANT (2012)

Having rekindled the magic while on the Return To Eden Tour, the members of Ultravox holed up in Midge Ure's Montreal cabin to secretly record a new album, their first as a quartet since 1984's *Lament*. While the resulting *Brill!ant* album didn't quite live up to its name, it did include one classic in its digital-only single title track. Ure explained to *Stereoboard* it was a "bittersweet comment on pop culture. It's about the other side of fame and success... the bright young things that ignore the consequences of fame."

17

KATE BUSH
KING OF THE MOUNTAIN (2005)

Prioritising motherhood and domestic solitude over the release of new material, Kate Bush evaded public attention for over a decade following 1993's *The Red Shoes*, before returning with ambitious double album *Aerial*. Replete with vocal slurs that mimicked Elvis, her typically quirky comeback meditated on the King's stardom, and playfully pondered the possibility of him riding Citizen Kane's sled in some snow-capped utopia. A Top 10 hit, it included a take on Marvin Gaye's *Sexual Healing* on the B-side.

16

THE HUMAN LEAGUE
TELL ME WHEN (1994)

The League were devastated after being dropped by Virgin in 1992, although Philip Oakey conceded they'd lost their way, telling *Billboard*: "We went in some silly directions after *Dare*, trying to bring in acoustic instruments and trying to make white soul music." A trip to Japan to work with the famed Yellow Magic Orchestra restored their confidence, and after signing to East West, *Tell Me When* gave them their biggest hit since 1986's *Human*, while the success of parent LP *Octopus* gave them the platform to tour for the first time in eight years.

15

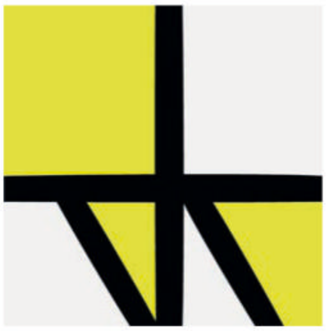
MADNESS
LOVESTRUCK (1999)

Following the successful re-release of *It Must Be Love* and the *Divine Madness* retrospective, the classic Nutty Boys line-up reformed for the legendary Madstock! shows in 1992. Bored of playing the hits on subsequent tours, they reunited with producers Clive Langer and Alan Winstanley to record the *Wonderful* LP. Detailing a drunken night out, in which the sloshed and melancholy protagonist ends up pouring his heart out to a lamppost, lead single *Lovestruck* staggered into the Top 10, their biggest self-penned UK hit since 1983's *The Sun And The Rain*.

14

TEARS FOR FEARS
THE TIPPING POINT (2021)

Ostensibly favouring the lucrative live circuit, Tears For Fears weren't in a hurry to record a follow-up to 2004's reunion album *Everybody Loves A Happy Ending*, and they almost split for good following a largely fruitless attempt to work with contemporary hitmakers. In the end they went back to basics, channelling personal experience into their songs, with *Please Be Happy* and the title track of their extraordinary comeback album *The Tipping Point* rooted in Roland Orzabal's pain of watching his late wife's health deteriorate.



13

NEW ORDER
RESTLESS (2015)

Rallying in the wake of Peter Hook's acrimonious departure, New Order recorded the guest-packed *Music Complete*, their first album in a decade, and arguably their finest since 1989's *Technique*. Setting the standard was lead single *Restless*. "It's an observation on how society has become consumerism driven," Bernard Sumner told *The Quietus*. "How we are sold things through television, how we are sold things directly into our homes, how we are sold directly into our half-asleep brains, how it's rammed down our throats."

12

DAVID BOWIE
WHERE ARE WE NOW? (2013)

Presumed retired since a heart attack had curtailed his A Reality Tour in 2004, it came as a shock when this dropped on the lesser spotted chameleon's 66th birthday. Somehow, he'd recorded comeback album *The Next Day* in secret with long-time collaborator Tony Visconti, evading the rumour mill and the invasive clutches of social media. A reflective ballad with nostalgic snapshots of the Thin White Duke's time in Berlin in the late 70s, *Where Are We Now?* was well worth the decade-long wait.

11

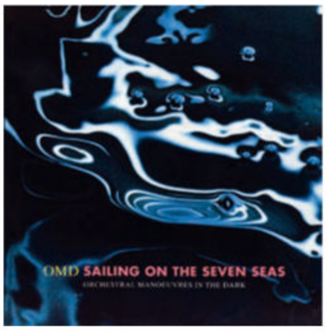
MORRISSEY
IRISH BLOOD, ENGLISH HEART (2004)

Following 1997's failed album *Maladjusted*, Morrissey holed himself up in La La Land, only leaving home to road-test new material. He returned in 2004, brandishing a Tommy gun on the sleeve of hit-packed album *You Are The Quarry*. A celebration of his Anglo-Irish heritage, incendiary lead single *Irish Blood, English Heart* also saw Moz taking aim at British politicians and a monarchy he claimed still "salute" Oliver Cromwell, the man responsible for the brutal conquest of his motherland.

10

A-HA
SUMMER MOVED ON (2000)

With a-ha on hiatus since 1994, its members immersed themselves in various projects, until an invitation to the Nobel Peace Prize Concert in 1998 gave them the ideal opportunity to reform. Guitarist Pål Waaktaar-Savoy rose to the occasion by penning *Summer Moved On*, which doubled up as their comeback single. Notable for its orchestral sweeps and lyrics that touched upon their strained relationships, it was a huge European hit, while Morten Harket's sustained note earned a spot in the record books.



09

OMD
SAILING ON THE SEVEN SEAS (1991)

Burned out after years chasing the American dream, the classic OMD line-up split in 1989, but frontman Andy McCluskey would later win the rights to the band name, leaving Paul Humphreys, Martin Cooper and Malcolm Holmes to record as The Listening Pool. Writing with local musicians Stuart Kershaw and Lloyd Massett, McCluskey returned with the hit *Sugar Tax*, preceded by *Sailing On The Seven Seas*, whose glam drums, Casio keyboard solo and earworm chorus gave OMD their biggest UK hit since 1984.

08

THE STONE ROSES
LOVE SPREADS (1994)

Having not released new music for over four years, anticipation had reached fever pitch by the time The Stone Roses unveiled *Second Coming* in December 1994, by which time the musical landscape had significantly altered in the wake of grunge and Britpop. A dirtier rock sound that leant heavily on Led Zeppelin and Hendrix surprised fans, but *Love Spreads* gave the Madchester favourites their biggest hit to date. "This is more how we want to sound," Ian Brown told *The Big Issue*. "It's much stronger and we sound like a proper live band."

07

TAKE THAT
PATIENCE (2006)

Following the airing of a new documentary, the greatest boy band of all time announced they were to reform – sans Robbie Williams – for a major tour, nearly a decade after hotlines were set up to help devastated teens deal with their split. Capitalising on their renewed popularity, the boys picked up where they'd left off with ninth chart-topper *Patience*. The well-crafted ballad later drew an unlikely champion in Manic Street Preachers bassist Nicky Wire, who boldly told *The Guardian* that it was "the greatest comeback single in history."

06

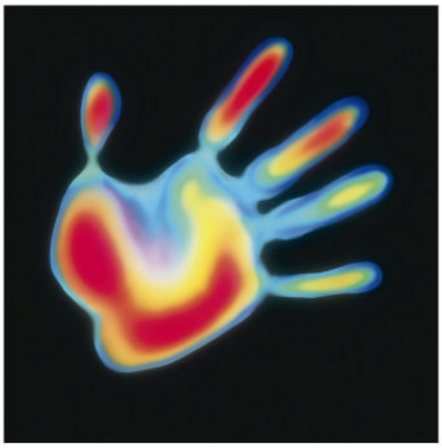
MANIC STREET PREACHERS
A DESIGN FOR LIFE (1996)

After considering splitting up in the aftermath of Richey Edwards' disappearance in 1995, the remaining Manics admirably resolved to finish the album they'd started with the talismanic guitarist. Boasting an opening line that had taken its inspiration from the stone inscription above the door of a Newport library, Nicky Wire wrote the lyrics for *A Design For Life* in response to what he perceived as "the patronisation of the working class". It was to be a breakthrough single at UK No.2.

05

GEORGE MICHAEL
JESUS TO A CHILD (1996)

Having extricated himself from his contract with Sony (who'd emerged victorious following a well-publicised court battle), George Michael returned to chart action after an absence of three years with this masterpiece, a tribute to former lover Anselmo Feleppa, who'd died from an AIDs-related brain haemorrhage in March 1993. The first of six hits to be lifted from comeback album *Older*, it was the singer's first self-penned UK chart-topper since *A Different Corner* in 1986. George secretly donated all of the song's royalties to Childline.



04

ABBA
DON'T SHUT ME DOWN (2021)

Even a reported billion dollars couldn't tempt the Swedish superstars out of retirement, so the announcement in 2021 that their 'virtual' residency at the ABBA Arena would be preceded by their first studio album in 40 years sent shockwaves across the globe. Purposely swerving contemporary chart sounds, *Voyage* recaptured the magic of yore, as evidenced by the simultaneously released singles *I Still Have Faith In You* and *Don't Shut Me Down*, the former a moving, self-referencing ballad, the latter an *Abba Gold*-worthy nugget.

03

ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN
NOTHING LASTS FOREVER (1997)

After Ian McCulloch's departure and the tragic death of drummer Pete de Freitas, the remaining Bunnymen kept the name alive with new singer Noel Burke, before disbanding after flop album *Reverberation*. "Once me and Will Sergeant got back together," McCulloch told *The Guardian*, "everything about daily life felt good again." Following one album as Electrafixion, the pair reformed the Bunnymen, and unleashed an evergreen classic in *Nothing Lasts Forever*, whose anthemic qualities chimed with the Britpop crowd.

02

BLONDIE
MARIA (1999)

Following the success of various remix projects and retrospectives, Blondie responded to an upsurge in popularity by reforming for a series of festival shows in 1997, but the legendary New Yorkers weren't content to just tread the nostalgia circuit, they wanted to record a new album, their first since drug-addled flop *The Hunter* in 1982. Hooking up with original producer Craig Leon, they emerged with *No Exit*, which yielded an instant classic in *Maria*. Penned by keyboardist Jimmy Destri, it was a worldwide hit, and their sixth UK chart-topper.

01

DURAN DURAN
ORDINARY WORLD (1992)

THEMES OF LOSS AND HOPE RESONATED WITH A WORLDWIDE AUDIENCE GIVING DURAN ONE OF THEIR BIGGEST HITS

By the turn of the 90s, Birmingham's finest had steered the good ship Duran through some stormy waters – the departures of Andy and Roger Taylor being two notable setbacks – and had continued to rack up the hits, with *Notorious* and *I Don't Want Your Love* doing particularly well at home and across the pond. But by the time of the *Liberty* album, their creative well appeared to have dried up, and the *Serious* single became their first to miss the UK's Top 40. Rather than allowing their career to mothball, they almost immediately began working on a new album at guitarist Warren Cuccurullo's home studio. By now Cuccurullo had become an official member of the band and a vital cog in the Duran machine, and his contributions would prove pivotal, not least on comeback single *Ordinary World*, which was characterised by his masterful solo. The second in a trilogy of songs that reflected on the death of one of Simon Le Bon's closest childhood friends, the sophisticated ballad's themes of loss and hope resonated with a worldwide audience, giving Duran one of their biggest hits, and a deserved Ivor Novello nomination. *The Wedding Album* would also spawn further hits in *Come Undone* and *Too Much Information*, making 1993 one of the most successful years in their career. Just don't mention what happened next...

IT'S BEEN 31 YEARS SINCE GABRIELLE HIT BIG WITH THE RECORD-BREAKING *DREAMS*. NOW SHE'S BACK WITH A MANY-FLAVOURED NEW ALBUM, AND A FRESH ARENA TOUR FOR 2025...

STEVE O'BRIEN

Listen, to her...

If there's any barometer of Gabrielle's cultural worth in the 2020s, look no further than the promo for Stormzy's 2022 single *Mel Made Me Do It*. There she was, an artist whose first hit was a staggering 29 years ago, sharing screen time with this decade's hottest UK rapper and such names as Usain Bolt, José Mourinho and Ian Wright. Similarly, when the now 54-year-old released her latest single, the gorgeous, giddily infectious *A Place in Your Heart*, there she was on Graham Norton's top-rated chat show. Her last album, 2021's *Do It Again*, went Top 5. The one before that almost did the same.

When the singer gigged in 2023, for the 30 Years Of Dreaming Tour, she sold out all 32 dates. Gabrielle, it seems, is as exalted in 2024 as she was when she first released *Dreams* (a UK No.1, natch) back in the summer of 1993.

"*Dreams* will be 31 years old this year, which sounds crazy!" the singer tells *Classic Pop* about her breakthrough single. We ask how the 24-year-old Louise Gabrielle Bobb would react if she could, through some kind of crystal ball, see her career now. "I think I'd be like, 'Wow, I can't believe you're still here, kiddo!'" she guffaws. "I'd probably be high-fiving myself!"

After debuting its title track during her 30 Years Of Dreaming Tour, Gabrielle will play her new album at festival shows this year and arena dates in April 2025

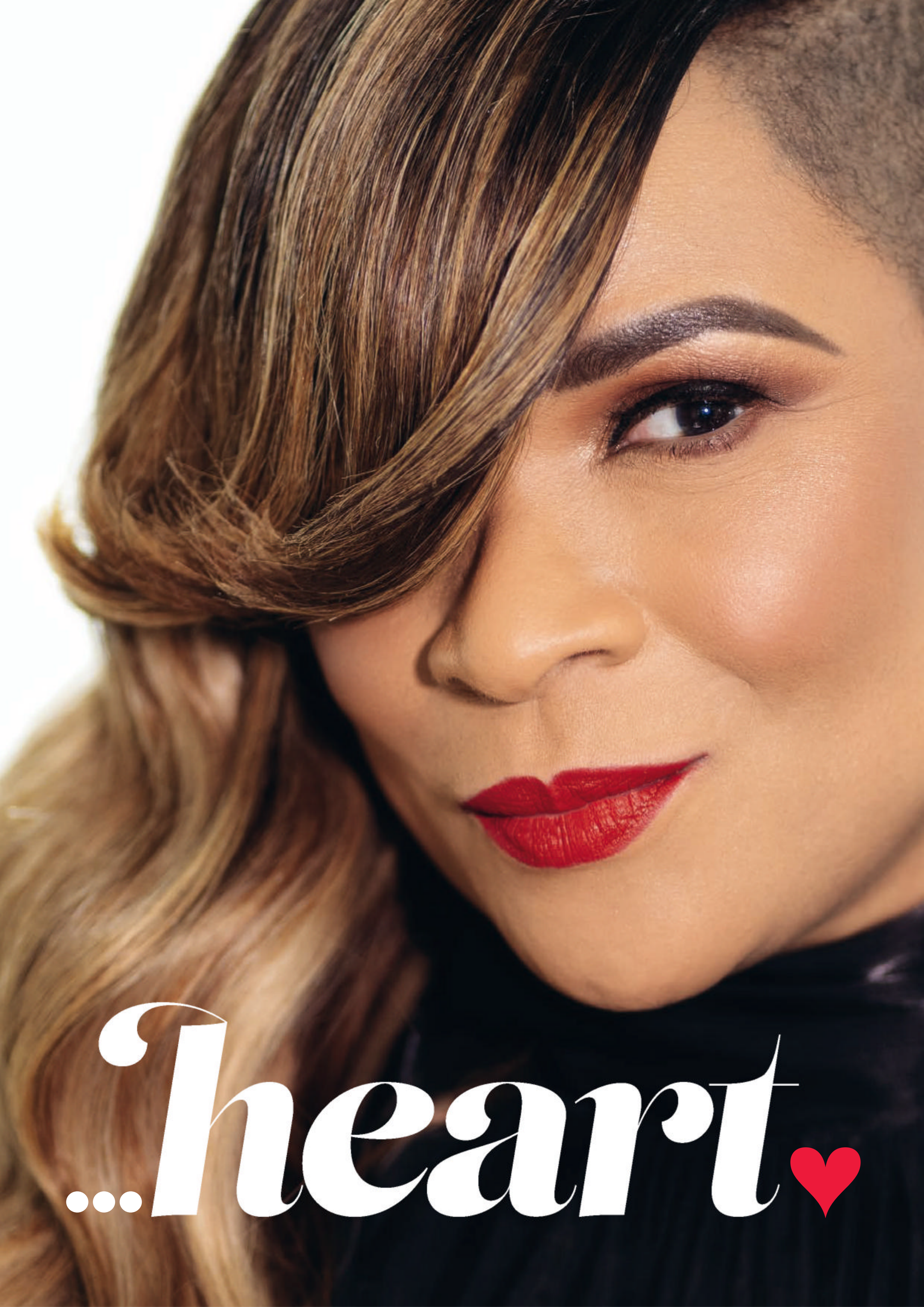
A FRESH OUTLOOK

The reason *Classic Pop* is sitting down with Gabrielle today is because of her brand new album, titled after that latest 45, *A Place In Your Heart*. There's also the matter of a major arena tour for 2025, but more on that later.

The last we heard from the much-loved popster was in 2021. But as great as *Do It Again* was, it was a covers collection, with Gabrielle taking on favourites such as Womack & Womack's *Teardrops*, The Jackson 5's *I'll Be There* and even a song composed by Charlie Chaplin (that's *Smile*).

But what fans have really been waiting for is a fresh album of all-new material, and that's what we're finally getting with *A Place In Your Heart*, a 12-track assemblage of effervescent – and sometimes achingly melancholic – pop nuggets, anchored by *that* voice.

On that previous occasion when *CP* hooked up with Gabrielle, she seemed keen to extricate herself from the soul diva label she's been grappling with since the mid-90s. "I love soul," she told us in 2020, "but I'm an 80s pop child. The posters on my wall were Michael Jackson, Madonna, Adam And The Ants and Nick Heyward."


...heart

Living proof: Gabrielle has two 4x Platinum albums, two BRIT awards, two MOBOs and an Ivor Novello

© Pictorial Press Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo

"This album is a plethora of everything I love doing," she tells us excitedly, four years on. "There's definitely some soul flavours on there, but also little rocky vibes and heartbreaking songs. People who've heard the music keep saying to me, 'Oh my god, why are you singing that, that's such a sad song,' and I'm like, 'That's what I do, I can't help it.' I love upbeat but then I love being able to sing my heartbreakers because of things that I've gone through and I know other people have."

WING MAN

At the moment, it's hard to picture Gabrielle with a shattered heart. Few pop stars are so aflame and as incredibly positive talking up their latest project, especially after 31 years in the business. But then life is good now for the singer. Not only does Gabrielle have a new album to promote, but she's basking in her newly-acquired role of grandmother. "I was looking after my grandson yesterday, and he's going to be a year old next month," she says proudly. "He is incredible, so yeah, I'm in a peaceful phase of my life right now. And the fact that I've got new music, that's really exciting for me."

A Place In Your Heart reteams Gabrielle with her songwriting partner (also producer) Ian Barter, whom she first collaborated with on 2018 comeback album, *Under My Skin*. They'd met after BMG's Jamie Nelson put them in touch, with the label boss telling Gabrielle, "I've got an idea of someone who will be great for you musically."

"The first time me and Ian met, he played me pieces of music that ended up on the album and I remember saying to my manager, 'Oh my god, this is the kind of music I should have done a long time ago,' because he was giving me these different sounds that I hadn't done before. Just the vibe, the whole feel of it was like, 'oh my god'. So when I started working with him I was, 'I can never let this man go.' I've worked with people for years, and then after a while, it doesn't work. But for some reason, it's not the case with Ian. He just keeps giving me these amazing musical pieces that always speak to me. So it was just the most natural thing that I would end up working with him solely on this album. He just draws it out of me, so I just think it's a great combination. I'm not messing with that at all right now, not for the foreseeable future."

"We were having such a fun time. The songs were a breeze," says Gabrielle of recording sessions for her latest studio album

It's been difficult over the years, she admits, to find a collaborator that she's completely simpatico with. Gabrielle says that when she goes into a studio, she's insistent that whoever's producing her presses 'record' straight away. "If I start jumping on the music," she says, "and you're not recording me, more fool you. Because it's a feeling, and I don't always get that feeling again."

A Place In Your Heart seems to have been a relatively uncomplicated album to make then. Barter is, Gabrielle says, "spot on every time", and reveals that the LP didn't take long to record. "We were having such a fun time," she coos. "The songs were a breeze.

Though Barter is credited as co-writer and the album's sole producer, there's another collaborator on the record in the shape of the BRITs-nommed 25-year-old artist Mahalia. The pair first met when Gabrielle supported Adele at Hyde Park in 2022, with the twentysomething neo-soul newbie approaching the singer to tell her how much she loved her music. Fast-forward a year and Mahalia received an invitation from her hero to sing on the song *Good Enough*.

"She's a great singer-songwriter," Gabrielle says, clearly as much of a fan of this hot new talent as Mahalia is of her. "And it was just amazing to have such a positive and amazingly talented person singing with me. The song is about being female, and about being who you are. She just sounds incredible. I have to thank Adele that I got to meet her."

NOW AND ALWAYS

The fact that cutting edge artists such as Mahalia and Stormzy are knocking on Gabrielle's door is testament to how relevant she remains in 2024. But there was a period in which it looked as if Gabrielle had slipped quietly away from the music biz (she actually took time out to raise her children, son Jordan and daughter Patricia). After 2007's *Always* the singer took a step back, releasing just one mostly greatest hits album – 2013's *Now And Always: 20 Years Of Dreaming* – before returning with 2018's *Under My Skin*. Normally, an artist loses momentum after such a drawn-out break, shedding chunks of their fanbase and witnessing their big comeback languishing at the darker ends of the hit parade. But not so with Gabrielle. *Under My Skin* charted higher (UK No.7) than either of her two previous albums (her last LP proper *Always* had peaked at

Dream a little dream,

Dreams **was Gabrielle's debut single in June 1993 and made history at the time, entering the UK hit parade at No.2, which was the highest chart entry a debut act had obtained in Britain at that time, quickly reaching No.1 for three weeks. It's still the song for which she's most remembered, but what's her relationship with it now?**

"Oh, I've always embraced it," she says. "Although sometimes I might have a wobble where someone will be like, 'Oh, we want you to do this TV show. They want you to sing *Dreams*.' And I'm like, 'I love singing *Dreams*, but *Out Of Reach* was bigger!' You hear other artists not wanting to sing the songs that launched them, but for me, I've never been upset about it. I never do a show and go, 'I'm not going to sing this song. I've sung it too many times' – hell-frickin'-no. This is a song people come to see. It has so many memories for so many people and I'm here for it."

And does she have any idea how many times she's performed *Dreams* over the past three decades?

"I almost don't want to know," she laughs. "Maybe someday somebody could compile a list. But it wouldn't be easy to do, because I was singing that song even before I was famous. That's actually a damn good question – and now you've got me thinking! But I never get bored of singing it, I gotta say that."

© Getty

Gabrielle onstage at the Cambridge Club Festival at Childerley Orchard, June 2022

No.11, while *Now And Always* only just broke the Top 40), proving that the public was hungry for more from one of the 90s' signature artists.

"I knew when I finished the *Under The Skin* album, I felt really happy," Gabrielle beams, revealing that she knows a record is working when she wants to spin it in her own car. "If I want to crank it up in there, I will – I mean no one knows it's my song! [laughs]. It's then I know that I'm onto a good thing."

Of course, listening to a new song in your motor is nothing like debuting it live. And of *A Place In Your Heart*'s 12 tracks, several have already been previewed, as part of last year's 30 Years Of Dreaming Tour. More, however, will be getting an airing in 2025, for her next 10-date arena tour, that kicks off at Glasgow's SEC Armadillo on 2 April, taking in such venues as Birmingham's Resorts World Arena, Manchester's AO Arena and, for the first time ever, London's O2.

"It's scary, but fun at the same time," Gabrielle says about the prospect of performing in the capital's iconic 20,000-capacity arena. "I never thought that would actually happen. It's quite daunting, but I'm up for the challenge. I wouldn't have believed that I'd be doing this in my fifties. Some people would be unfazed, but I am friggin' *fazed* by this!"

"THIS ALBUM IS A PLETHORA OF EVERYTHING – SOUL FLAVOURS, BUT ALSO ROCKY VIBES AND HEARTBREAKING SONGS"

FAMILY AFFAIR

For her 30 Years tour, Gabrielle was supported by Wallis Bird and Skinny Living, but for this set of concerts she'll be joined by Tunde Baiyewu, one-time lead singer with 90s pop pairing Lighthouse Family. "I love the Lighthouse family and I love Tunde's voice," Gabrielle enthuses. "I'm going to have such a blast on this tour. I've always had their music on in the background of my house, in my car. I've got all their CDs – and yes, I still play CDs in my car! To actually know that I'm going to be going on the road with him, it's going to be incredible."

While 15 years ago, it looked as if Gabrielle had retired, it seems now – at the age of 54 – that she's busier and happier than ever before. With no kids at home anymore, her only obligations outside of music are her grandma duties, and, as she says, "you get to give them back at the end of the day"

So, is she planning studio LP number nine? "There's no stopping me," she laughs. "There's nothing else to do now. All the mummy things have gone, and the nanny thing is different, so there's even more time. I'm just really excited – the new album's out in May, I'll be touring in 2025 and, dare I say it, I'll have a new album out in 2026. I'm just at a really nice place right now."

In her latest song, she sings, "I'm ready now, do you have a place for me in your heart" – it's plain to see that British music lovers are answering in the affirmative. ■

● ***A Place In Your Heart*** **is released on 10 May via BMG and reviewed on page 91**

DHP FAMILY PRESENT
AN EVENING WITH
THE CHRISTIANS
JUNE 2024
07 Sale Waterside
08 Gateshead Glasshouse ICM
11 Cardiff Tram Shed
12 Bath Komedia
13 Brighton St Georges Church
14 London Union Chapel
15 Liverpool Mountford Hall
TICKETS ON SALE VIA
ALTTICKETS.COM | THECHRISTIANSLIVE.CO.UK
dp

READING THIS?
So are thousands of others!
89%
find the advertising in Classic Pop useful / very useful
65%
bought something as a direct result of seeing it featured in the magazine
DIGITAL PACKAGES ALSO AVAILABLE!
classicpopmag.com
Dedicated eShots
122k+ combined digital audience
Get in touch with Leah to find out more
leah.fitz-henry@anthem.co.uk

CLASSIC POP
HORRIBLE THINGS
GEORGE MICHAEL
GOTTA HAVE FAITH
BANANARAMA
DOWNLOAD YOUR FREE APP TODAY!
READ ON ANY DEVICE, ANY TIME!
Find Classic Pop magazine and Classic Pop Presents special editions in our app today.

© Peter Ashworth 1979

Reviews

THE HOT LIST 86
Billy Idol, Ladsclub, Bruce Hornsby & YMUSIC (BRHYM), Vampire Weekend

NEW RELEASES 87
Pet Shop Boys, Paul Weller, Mark Knopfler, Crowded House, Shaznay Lewis, Sananda Maitreya, Gabrielle, The Woodentops, The Blow Monkeys, The Zutons, Richard Hawley, Lenny Kravitz, Paraorchestra, A Certain Ratio, Fabiana Palladino, Barry Adamson, Bright Light Bright Light, Trifecta, Michael Head & The Red Elastic Band, Judie Tzuke, Alfie Templeman

REISSUES 94
Various Artists – *Rusty Egan Presents BLITZED!*, Blancmange, Girls Aloud, Electribe 101, Sparks/Noël, Air, Various Artists – *Now Yearbook 74, Now Yearbook 90 Extra, Now 12" 80s: 1982 Part 2, Now 80s Dancefloor: R&B & Funk*, Keane, Tina Turner, Flowered Up, Belinda Carlisle, China Crisis, The Durutti Column, The Cure, Manic Street Preachers, Cranes, Xmal Deutschland, Looper, Laura Branigan, The Toy Dolls, Garbage

LIVE 101
ABC, OMD, Lust For Life, Goldfrapp

BOOKS 105
ABBA On Record: Packaged, Promoted, Reviewed by Carl Magnus Palm; *The Rejects: An Alternative History Of Popular Music* by Jamie Collinson; *Springsteen: Album By Album* by Ryan White; *Bowie Odyssey 74* by Simon Goddard

RATINGS

★★★★★ EXCELLENT
★★★★ VERY GOOD
★★★ GOOD
★★ PATCHY
★ POOR

Stunning compilation *Rusty Egan Presents BLITZED!* gets a five-star rating – we review it on page 94

THE HOT LIST

NEW RELEASES THAT NEED TO BE ON YOUR CULTURAL RADAR

STEVE HARNELL

© Brian Aris

1 BILLY IDOL
REBEL YELL

The lip-curlin' punk icon has a few surprises up his leather-jacketed sleeve on a forthcoming deluxe expanded edition of the *Rebel Yell* album to celebrate its 40th anniversary. The reissue includes a selection of previously unreleased songs and demos, the Poolside remix of hit single *Eyes Without A Face* and the never-before-heard *Best Way Out Of Here* from the original recording sessions. A barnstorming unreleased cover of Rose Royce's *Love Don't Live Here Anymore* trails the reissue and is now available on streaming platforms. The expanded reissue is available in 2LP, 2CD and digital formats from 26 April.

2 LADSCLUB
LADSCLUB

Brighton-based duo Ladsclub have honed a set of original demos that were first posted online a year ago into an impressive debut album of electro bangers. Citing Pet Shop Boys as a sonic touchstone – most evident on the likes of *Matinee* and the clipped, cut glass vocals of *Discoprancing* – there's plenty of dancefloor-friendly juice to enjoy here. Among the standouts elsewhere are stomping piano-led house anthem *Init*, the throbbing *Lovebombed*, which delves into harder-hitting Underworld territory, and tongue-in-cheek *Big*. There's even a slice of Peaches-style sauciness on *Heavy*.

3 BRUCE HORNSBY & YMUSIC (BRHYM)
DEEP SEA VENTS

Hornsby's late-career avant garde flourish continues on this collaborative project with experimental chamber ensemble yMusic. *Deep Sea Vents* is an album of 10 songs about water and the ways we live with, in, or against it. Also featured on the LP is jazz legend Branford Marsalis. Hornsby explains: "Over the last decade-plus, my journey has included a number of attempts at bringing modern classical content and sounds to the classic pop songwriting structure... all potentially leading to this moment and this release." yMusic have previously worked with artists including Anohni, John Legend and Paul Simon.

4 VAMPIRE WEEKEND
ONLY GOD WAS ABOVE US

The New York indie rockers have certainly put in the hours on this long-awaited follow-up to fourth studio album *Father Of The Bride*. With sessions spread across the globe encompassing London, Tokyo, Los Angeles and their Big Apple hometown, the bulk of the lyrics for *Only God Was Above Us* were written by frontman Ezra Koenig back in 2019-20. The band has spent the last five years refining and reshaping both the words and melodic structures over that time to create what they're calling a "defining statement." The album is out now via Columbia Records.

PET SHOP BOYS
NONETHELESS

PARLOPHONE

★★★★☆

NEIL TENNANT IS IN THE FORM OF HIS LIFE AS THE SYNTH-POP LEGENDS CELEBRATE GOING BACK HOME WITH ONE OF THEIR MOST DIVERSE ALBUMS TO DATE

Returning to their original label of Parlophone 12 years after *Elysium* looked like being the final album on their natural home, Pet Shop Boys mark the occasion with their most stately work since that polarising record.

Neil Tennant promised *CP* last year that "The strings are back", which is in truth a worrying sign for those fans who found *Elysium* and *Release* just a little too sombre. That their new producer James Ford's work with The Last Shadow Puppets, of all bands, was the reason PSB approached him – rather than, say, having Kylie, Jessie Ware or Depeche Mode on his CV – equally appears a head-scratcher.

Yet, if *Nonetheless* isn't *quite* in the same class as *Behaviour* (and frankly, what is?), it certainly shares the spirt of their 1990 masterpiece. Rather than the "We're serious artists" mood of 2002's *Release*, here the strings and brass are largely there to bring extra joy.

Neil Tennant has rarely celebrated love so openly in his lyrics than *Feel* or *The Secret Of Happiness*, ballads which head further into the stars thanks to their opulent arrangements. For anyone who has *Between Two Islands* as their favourite PSB B-side, its Balearic bliss is back on *The Secret Of Happiness*.

The extravagance peaks on *A New Bohemia*, one of Tennant/Lowe's richest and most dramatic songs, yet maintaining a truth and beauty thanks to Neil's plaintive vocals at its core. Indeed, one of *Nonetheless*' many joys is how beautiful Tennant's voice is. He may joke that crying on the dancefloor is his comfort zone in the *I Wouldn't Normally Do This Kind Of Thing* mood of *Why Am I Dancing?*, yet Neil's voice has never been so consistently emotional as it is across these 10 songs.

While Tennant's gravitas dominates, *Nonetheless* isn't especially earnest, as it's still in thrall to the joys of pop: house banger *Bullet For Narcissus* is this album's *So Hard* and the chunky *Dancing Star* could have bounced straight in from Side Two of *Please*. OK, that means we have to endure the weirdly garish *The Schlager Hit Parade*, which is basically what Pet Shop Boys haters think Pet Shop Boys always sound like, but one bit of eurotrash can't disrupt an otherwise perfectly judged album.

Nonetheless is the most varied PSB LP since *Fundamental*, almost an instant Best Of for how many other Pets songs it brings to mind. It deserves to capitalise on any wayward fans returned to the fold since the endless post-Covid hits tour. And, given how good Neil Tennant's vocals are here, it seems like Pet Shop Boys might just be getting started all over again. **John Earls**

PAUL WELLER
66
POLYDOR

★★★★☆

By Paul Weller's prolific standards, the three-year gap since *Fat Pop* has been like waiting for a new album by The La's. The one exception to Weller's mighty run since 2008's *22 Dreams* was 2018's *True Meanings* – the only time in the subsequent 16 years it's felt like the Modfather was offering what traditionalists wanted, in a disappointing return to reflective ballads. To generalise, *66* is everything that *True Meanings* wasn't.

Having Peter Blake design the sleeve for the first time since *Stanley Road* hints that Weller is back on familiar territory. Yet, while *66* is heavy on ballads, he's managed to weave in his recent jazzy grooves into the arrangements, while his voice is more supple than the *Heavy Soul* days, too. Really, *66* could be a Style Council LP.

Although smoky slowies dominate, Bobby Gillespie co-write *Soul Wandering* is vintage gnarly rock built on a thunderous riff. Co-written with Noel Gallagher, *Jumble Queen* is even more familiar punk, despite its horn blasts. The most unexpected uptempo moment, *Flying Fish,* is the rarely spotted Paul Weller synth-pop banger: Vince Clarke could have co-written it. It's fabulous.

Richard Hawley and Dr Robert apparently feature, too, but the most distinctive guests are euphoric trio Say She She, bringing extra power to the already righteous drama of *In Full Flight.*

© Nicole Nodland

Semi-acoustic Suggs co-write *Ship Of Fools* is a relatively straightforward opener in its arrangement, yet Weller sings at the upper end of his register, a fascinating glimpse of what's to come on the album. *Nothing* and *I Woke Up* are sensuous sways, Weller a convincing crooner, with the melody of *My Best Friend's Coat* oddly reminiscent of *Golden Brown*, just to stop listeners getting comfortable. Only *A Glimpse Of You* is a ballad too far, and it's sweet enough in isolation.

By now, saying Weller is right on it is about the only predictable thing about him. But for any hardcore mods still disconcerted by recent experiments, start here: he's still blowing minds, but newcomers are welcome, too. **JE**

MARK KNOPFLER
ONE DEEP RIVER
BRITISH GROVE

★★★½☆

Two months after the instruments which birthed *Money For Nothing* and *Walk Of Life* sold at auction for over £1 million in total, Mark Knopfler returns to prove his guitar heroics are still intact. Of course, having long since settled into the status of elder statesman, his 10th album is less arena axeman and more front porch troubadour.

Once again produced by former bandmate Guy Fletcher, the follow-up to 2018's *Down The Road Wherever* mines a similar vein of country, blues,

folk and Americana, the loping grooves of opener *Two Pairs Of Hands* the only concession to any musical developments since Dire Straits disbanded 29 years ago. Yet, amid all the genial, laidback vibes, there's an occasional lyrical bite.

Boasting wistful pedal steel from Grammy-winning sideman Greg Leisz, *Smart Money* takes aim at the fickleness of celebrity culture, and you can take your pick from the multiple suspects likely to have inspired political diatribe *This One's Not Going To End Well* ("Still after he's gone/ They'll whip up old lies/ To ride into power.")

Now in his mid-70s and with a world-weary voice to match, Knopfler also gets deeply reflective about his early career. The bittersweet *Watch Me Gone* addresses his conflicted feelings about hitting the big time: "It's all gonna happen/ And I'll be a happenin' man." Meanwhile, the chugging *Ahead Of The Game* finds Knopfler offering advice to an aspiring singer-songwriter, perhaps his younger self, about the trials and tribulations of starting from the bottom.

Delving even further back, the orchestral *Black Tie Jobs* is a sobering account of Knopfler's newsroom beginnings: the inner journalist also comes out in how detailed *Tunnel 13* documents its real-life 1920s train robbery. Meanwhile, the closing title track, a harmony-laden ode to the Tyne, adds to Knopfler's canon of hometown love letters. The proud Geordie should be equally proud of how he quietly continues to extend his legacy. **Jon O'Brien**

CROWDED HOUSE
GRAVITY STAIRS

BMG

★★★★½

MAY/JUNE 2024
CLASSIC POP
BEST NEW RELEASE

NEARLY 40 YEARS IN, NEIL FINN AND NICK SEYMOUR ARE STILL FINDING WAYS TO CHALLENGE THEMSELVES, WHILE RETAINING THEIR GIFT FOR CLASSIC MELODIES THAT SOUND ABSOLUTELY EFFORTLESS

While pop may be a young person's game, for singer-songwriters of a more reflective persuasion, there's a lot to be said for having a few miles on the clock – and the bruises to show for it. And so, to such late career triumphs as Bob Dylan's *Time Out Of Mind* and Leonard Cohen's *You Want It Darker*, we might now add Crowded House's *Gravity Stairs*, on which the 65-year-old Neil Finn contemplates the titular climb as: "A metaphor for getting a little older, and becoming aware of your own mortality, your own physicality".

But if it's getting harder to drag weary bones to the top of the hill, you wouldn't know it from an album – only Crowded House's eighth in a 38-year career – on which those trademark sweet melodies and lush harmonies feel as effortlessly plucked from the ether as ever, while also adding subtle new shades to their musical palette.

The opening *Magic Piano* is as gorgeous as anything in the Crowded House catalogue: think Simon And Garfunkel playing Pink Floyd (if Pink Floyd knew when to end a song). Written by Finn as a love letter to music itself, it more than justifies its own sentiment. *Life's Imitation*, a plea for human connection born of lockdown isolation, mines our darkest days and emerges with a song of joyful celebration, while *The Howl* is an equally effervescent slice of jangle-pop.

Some Greater Plan (For Claire) borrows from Finn's father's wartime diaries for the tale of a whirlwind Mediterranean romance, complete with flamenco

guitar flourishes. The trippy *Black Water, White Circle*, by contrast, looks forward, peering beyond the veil into the afterlife, encouraging the band – co-founder Nick Seymour on bass, longtime producer Mitchell Froom on keys, plus Finn's sons Liam and Elroy on guitar and drums – to make a tastefully restrained pass at psychedelic rock. Recent Radio 2 staple *Oh Hi* is a sunny earworm that channels the infectious enthusiasm of children Finn has met through his charitable endeavours in Kenya and Tanzania, while the jaunty *I Can't Keep Up With You* is the greatest ELO song Jeff Lynne never wrote.

Closer *Night Song* is a siren call to the wee small hours, which starts out sounding like 2am in an emptying jazz club, before slipping through different arrangements and time signatures, each underpinned by Froom's own magic piano. Through some act of quantum trickery, it's a piece that, like much of *Gravity Stairs*, manages to sound both playfully experimental, and reassuringly like Crowded House. Which, four decades into your career, feels like a very good place to be. **Paul Kirkley**

SHAZNAY LEWIS
PAGES

1.9.7.5

★★★½☆

Six years after All Saints' most recent album and fully 20 years after *Open* was her only previous solo LP, Shaznay Lewis finally unveils more of her songwriting, resulting in 12 further reminders of her varied skills within most forms of pop.

While *Open* had a stellar backroom cast including Rick Nowels, Basement Jaxx and Bacon & Quarmby helping out, here Florence + The Machine co-writer Ant Whiting is the most instantly familiar name.

Lewis is undeniably the big talent this time around.

The summery mood of *Got To Let Go* is the closest to Lewis' day job and would doubtless have reached No.1 if it had been the follow-up to *Pure Shores*. Lyrically, it's more similar to the rest of the album. Empowerment is ultimately the theme – more so than on *Open*, which arrived soon after All Saints' troubled first split, Lewis sounds confident, relaxed and ready to share lessons from a quarter of a century of the pop life.

That confidence extends to *Pages*' eclecticism, with the breakbeats of General Levy/Shola Ama collaboration *Good Mourning* followed by *Supposed To Be*'s finger-clicking minimalist bounce, where Lewis reminds us she's too good a singer to feel the need to showboat her range. Instead, as with the break-up disco of *Tears To The Floor*, Lewis lets the power of the song take her voice where it needs to.

© Oscar J Ryan

The only problem is that Lewis appears so relaxed that she occasionally seems in a comfort zone. As powerful as *Bruises* and *Peaches* are lyrically, the music is anonymous pop/soul and power ballad respectively, unable to live up to the sentiment. They resemble demos Lewis has written for another artist to take on.

Mostly, Lewis appears to be thriving just fine on her own. The stunning *Hearts In Danger* is a mighty vintage disco stormer to end Shaznay's solo return. "Going out of control!" she roars. No chance of that. It's taken long enough, but *Pages* shows that Shaznay Lewis' music is right where it should be. **JE**

SANANDA MAITREYA
THE PEGASUS PROJECT: PEGASUS & THE SWAN

TREEHOUSE

★★★★☆

As Sananda Maitreya makes it clear in this issue, his first UK show for 22 years this summer doesn't necessarily mean he'll be rolling out the hits. He's got more than enough music to keep everyone entertained since re-emerging in 2005 with the music he dubs "Post-Millennial Rock".

Truth is, Maitreya could dust off a show exclusively from his 13th album and it would be a sensation. As with many of his recent LPs, there's a lot of material

to get through: 41 tracks, including a dozen or so alternative versions. Coupled with the fact it completes a trilogy of albums based on the myth of Prometheus' exile from Mount Olympus, and you'd be forgiven for thinking it's a forbidding prospect. Not a bit of it. Not so much an album as an experience, Sananda's Pegasus gallops along.

While the would-be Bond theme dramatics of *Mr Magoo* are designed as the opening of Sananda's planned musical about his own Promethean banishment from the music industry, that's the only explicit link to a more overarching story. Dive straight in here, and a musical boxset binge awaits.

"Post-Millennial Rock" is something of a misnomer, as Maitreya masters a host of styles. *Camden Town* and first single *The Birthday Song* are

© Manuel Scrima

confident strutting rock'n'roll, while at the other extreme *Time Takes Time* has the opulence of a classic Disney theme. The lyrics are just as unpredictable, too, ranging from the empathetic hard-won wisdom in *Life Will Go On* to the addictive dayglo pop of *The Things U Like* arriving wrapped in a tale explicit enough to make Sananda's old friend Prince blush. *Bondage* and *Being Watched* are similarly lewd and similarly catchy, while *Nice Things* lives up to its title, a neat Sisyphean tale under the accompanying vintage funk power.

Sananda's former backing singers Beatrice Baldaccini and Luisa Corna take centre stage on a pair of operatic ballads, but this is Maitreya doing things his way again.

If this were another, less polarising singer, people would hail it as an eccentric masterpiece. Don't let Sananda Maitreya's complicated story overlook how he's still delivering soulpopfunkrock infectiousness with ease. **JE**

GABRIELLE
A PLACE IN YOUR HEART
BMG

★★★★☆

Although it appeared a rum move at the time, after appearing on *The Masked Singer* in 2021 Gabrielle is more of a star than since the *Out Of Reach* days, with her biggest ever headline show at London O2 happening next year. It helps that she's also supported Adele and featured with Stormzy in the interim.

Her covers album *Do It Again* was solid, but was released suspiciously quickly after her primetime ITV residency. Gabrielle's first album of fresh material in six years is where she needs to show she can still craft new songs worthy of that forthcoming arena tour. Thankfully, she comfortably delivers, though not in ways usually associated with her music.

Gabrielle's heartfelt lyrics have previously been offset by her music's lightness, hence her frustration that she's stereotyped as a soul siren, rather than recognised as a pop singer. On the most serious album of her career, this is Gabrielle as blues-rock vocalist.

Working again with Ian Barter, producer/co-writer of 2018's *Under My Skin*, it's not like Gabrielle is muscling into Eric Clapton territory. However, you wouldn't exactly put the moody, late-night contemplative *Change* on the *Bridget Jones' Diary* soundtrack. Similarly delicate guitars in *Lifeline* play out behind Gabrielle singing about the cost of living crisis.

The shuffling, head-nodding groove *Good Enough*, a duet with recent Brits nominee Mahalia, sounds like a lost Acid Jazz classic. Its message that you sometimes need to dust yourself down is driven home by *Never*. Gabrielle says in this issue that she's naturally drawn to writing sad songs. Whether she has ever written one as heart-wrenchingly desolate as *Never* is debatable, and that's from the singer who made *Rise*.

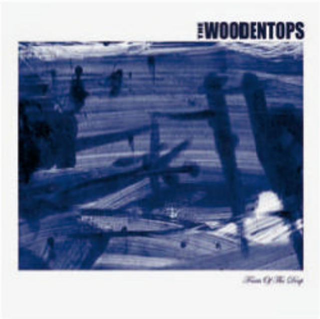
It's not all yearning and heartache. The closing *Conquer* is sharp modern pop, a sparse groove made for Gabrielle's commanding vocals, about someone who makes the world better. After offering succour for the previous 11 songs, it's only fair Gabrielle gets some respite from the world, too. **JE**

THE WOODENTOPS
FRUITS OF THE DEEP
LITTLE PEOPLE BIG MUSIC

★★★★☆

"Singing as a man/ Words written as a boy," Rolo McGinty reveals amid *I Can Take It*'s Latin flavours. Though they're about his short time locked up as a 1970s young offender, they're indicative of the youthful joie de vivre crucial to The Woodentops' fourth album, their first since 2014's *Granular Tales.*

Reunited with co-founder and guitarist Simon Mawby and bassist Frank DeFreitas, McGinty launches nonchalantly into *Liquid Thinking* as though gone a mere couple of days, but it might also have sat just as well on 1986's *Giant* (recently celebrated in *Classic Pop*), just as percussive stomper *Lately* might have suited its 1988 follow-up, *Wooden Foot Cops On The Highway.*



A song about a toxic relationship with a croupier, *Can't Stand Still* meanwhile delivers a breathlessly energetic groove that would pack the dancefloors of their late-80s Balearic heights. *Saturday Soundcheck*, dominated by shuffling acoustic guitar and co-penned and recorded with *Jerry Springer: The Opera* co-writer Richard Thomas in just 15 minutes, demonstrates McGinty's spontaneous spirit.

The suitably hypnagogic *Dream On*, also written with Thomas, and delightful *Ride A Cloud* provide welcome experiments with dub and reggae, but if *Hotel* and *City Wakes* offer appealingly eccentric breathers, *Too Good To Stay*'s resolute, Spiritualized-like extravagance narrowly steals the day on this joyful, quixotic revival. **Wyndham Wallace**

THE BLOW MONKEYS
TOGETHER/ALONE
LAST NIGHT FROM GLASGOW

★★★☆☆

With six albums since they reformed in 2007, Dr Robert's crew have been among the most productive of 80s bands second time out. But now, for some reason, they've chosen this moment to make a stripped-down record that discards the various embellishments which usually fill out their sound.

It's a nice idea in theory, but in practice the drier-than-the-Sahara production leaves Robert's voice exposed at a time when it's showing signs of age. On some songs, he hovers uncertainly in the vague vicinity of notes. On others – and there's no other way of saying this – he's just plain flat.

In small doses, this needn't necessarily be deal-breaking; indeed, it makes recent single, the string-laden weepie *Stranger To Me Now*, all the more affecting. But, over the course of an entire album, it becomes immensely frustrating.

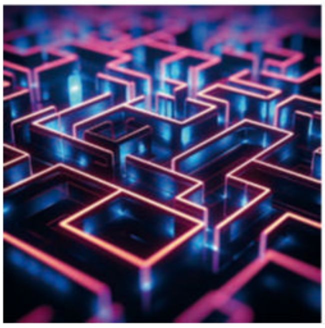
There are a lot of great musical ideas here. *Cool Summer Hideaway* is a delightfully gooey piece of bubblegum, *Waking Up Is Hard To Do* is modern blues disguised as 70s funk and *Don't Wish Away The Days* has a woozy tropical jazz feel. Some of these are the most poignant, personal songs Dr Robert has ever written. Hampering them like this, and making them sound like they were recorded in a cardboard box, seems like an act of unwitting self-sabotage. **Beth Simpson**

THE ZUTONS
THE BIG DECIDER
ICEPOP

Initially reforming in 2016, by the time The Zutons began making their first new album since 2008 during lockdown, guitarist Boyan Chowdhury and bassist Russell Pritchard were out again. While it's tough to precisely quantify their absence, the remaining trio's comeback doesn't live up to their *Who Killed The Zutons?* debut.

For every winningly simple piano 'n' handclaps campfire vibe like *Best Of Me*, there's an aimless jam like *Company*.

The title track zips along with the restless energy of *You Will You Won't*, but *Disappear* aptly fades into the background for five minutes, despite producer Nile Rodgers' mystical voiceover at its close.



Rodgers and Ian Broudie – who rarely produces anyone outside of his own music now – are as gifted a production duo as anyone could hope for. Dave McCabe was one of the most unpredictably talented songwriters of the noughties. When those talents combine, like the punchy *Pauline* showing McCabe has lost none of his knack for writing songs named after women, album four hints it'll be worth the wait. But when *In Your Arms*' listless balladry refuses to go anywhere, the big decision results in a maybe.

It's nice to have them back. Hopefully The Zutons can now use this to kickstart a more consistent follow-up with a quicker turnaround. **JE**

RICHARD HAWLEY
IN THIS CITY THEY CALL YOU LOVE
BMG

Richard Hawley has several excellent excuses to explain why *In This City They Call You Love* is his first new album in five years: his musical *Standing At The Sky's Edge* is a West End hit, winning Best Original Score at the 2023 Olivier Awards; he was shortlisted for Best Original Song at the Oscars for co-writing *Dear Alien (Who Art in Heaven)* with Jarvis Cocker and Wes Anderson; and Hawley released *Now Then*, an extensive Best Of compilation in 2023.

With its crisp arrangements and airtight songwriting, *In This City They Call You Love* is worth the wait. Produced by Hawley with his team of Mark Sheridan and Colin Elliot, the singer-songwriter's smoky vocals shroud propulsive rockers (*Deep Space*), snaky country-blues (*Two For His Heels*), delicate, twangy lullabies (*I'll Never Get Over You*), and solemn, gospel-tinged torch songs (*Deep Waters*).

The stripped-back golden-age country tune *Hear That Lonesome Whistle Blow* nods to another 2023 Hawley endeavour, a brief tour performing Patsy Cline songs with John Grant no less, while the gorgeous *People* is a sparse, stunning tune about Sheffield and its denizens. Although *In This City They Call You Love* covers familiar ground to previous Hawley LPs, the execution is fresh and flawless – and underscores his well-deserved influence and increased musical stature. **Annie Zaleski**

LENNY KRAVITZ
BLUE ELECTRIC LIGHT
BMG

The video to *TK421* caused ripples of excitement when it was released last October, with Lenny Kravitz revealing more to the viewer than just the secret of how to stay young.

Once over the shock of a naked, smoking, impossibly buff, soon-to-be-sexagenarian Kravitz, the propulsive electro-funk track stood up reasonably well, with his trademark mellifluous growling and hollering proving that he's in fine voice, too.

It all seemed to bode well for his 12th studio album, which has coincided with Kravitz's place on the Hollywood Walk Of Fame.

So is *Blue Electric Light* a return to form? It's certainly a return to the tried-and-tested formula of a Lenny Kravitz record: which is to say, a well-produced, almost entirely self-played album with few surprises, which could have been made at any time during the last 30 years.

The opening *It's Just Another Fine Day (In This Universe Of Love)* is the best thing he's done in ages – a crisp groove predicated on a simple chord vacillating from major to minor that contrasts with the soulful, elegant, yearning chorus that wouldn't have sounded out of place on *Mama Said*.

Less subtle are tracks such as *Love Is My Religion* and *Heaven*, where Kravitz's hoochie coochie man routine feels a little anachronistic in 2024. **Jeremy Allen**

PARAORCHESTRA
DEATH SONGBOOK
WORLD CIRCUIT

Paraorchestra are the world's first fully-integrated orchestra of disabled and non-disabled musicians. Conducted by Charles Hazlewood, they've previously played with Jarvis Cocker and Gruff Rhys, as well as touring a show reworking Kraftwerk.

Their debut album doubles as Brett Anderson's first solo LP since Suede reformed, and his first covers record. Echo & The Bunnymen's *The Killing Moon* is Anderson at his most dramatic but with enough control to soar in time with Paraorchestra's heightened playing. Japan's *Nightporter* is similarly expressive, a performance even David Sylvian would admire. OK, maybe. Nadine Shah sounds as noirish as Nico with Anderson on Mercury Rev's *Holes*, though the pair are more playful on Skeeter Davis' *The End Of The World*.

Not everything works: even Anderson can't bring anything new to *Enjoy The Silence* or an oddly glib *Wonderful Life*. But he does inject new flavours on his own past, via an industrial, frantic *She Still Leads Me On*.

Sole new song *Brutal Lover* is a piano ballad equal parts Arvo Pärt and Suede's *The Blue Hour*, while Paraorchestra are fluid throughout on arrangements that are sometimes unusual but invariably fitting.

While it's perhaps unfairly destined to be a curio to Suede fans, for those who do investigate, it's better than most covers albums and an intriguing showcase for Paraorchestra's talents. **JE**

A CERTAIN RATIO
IT ALL COMES DOWN TO THIS

MUTE

Mixing scratchy funk, jagged guitar and the freewheeling spirit of jazz, Manchester's A Certain Ratio did as much as anyone to invent post-punk. Over 45 years later, they remain very much a going concern. Indeed, ACR are flourishing, as proved by the trio's back-to-basics 13th album – largely recorded over a 12-hour session with producer Dan Carey. Standouts include the angular pop of *God Knows* and the reflective yet funky *We All Need*, but more important is the sense of ACR referencing the past while still moving forwards. **Jonathan Wright**

FABIANA PALLADINO
FABIANA PALLADINO

XL

The daughter of bass overlord Pino and The Fabulous Wealthy Tarts singer Maz, Fabiana Palladino produces her debut with maverick popster Jai Paul. That she's able to be a distinctive talent away from her lineage is credit not only to Palladino's adaptable voice – icily detached on the shiny *Closer*, yearning on dramatic ballad *Forever* – but her sharp songwriting, too. While the sleek pop largely inhabits Jessie Ware's polished futurism, *Shoulda*'s more organic kinetic pulse suggests Palladino's future might be best served by visceral rock'n'roll. **JE**

BARRY ADAMSON
CUT TO BLACK

BARRY ADAMSON INC

Barry Adamson's first album for eight years devours the sonic madeleines of childhood more than any of his since 1989's *Moss Side Story*. On *Cut To Black*, he revisits the Northern Soul clubs of his youth via opener *The Last Words Of Sam Cooke*, digging into rock'n'roll and swamp blues elsewhere. The sometime Bad Seed has always had an eye and ear for the cinematic, which manifests itself on *Waiting For The End Of Time*, a song so ornately lush that you'll find yourself longing for the apocalypse. **JA**

BRIGHT LIGHT BRIGHT LIGHT
ENJOY YOUTH

YSKWN

After exploring LGBTQ+ nightlife's history last time, Erasure/Scissor Sisters associate Rod Thomas looks inward, while keeping the strobe lights at full. As he sings on *Boys Etc*, "I bring you music while others bring you noise," a neat summary of his determination to keep Hi-NRG ablaze. *Down To One* and *Heartslap* are galloping rave, topped off by Ultra Naté giving it plenty on *Every Emotion*. Rod can do Marc Almond-style emoting, too, but this is defying the world to stop him and anyone else having big fun, youthful or not. **JE**

TRIFECTA
THE NEW NORMAL

KSCOPE

Although prog/jazz fusion trio Trifecta feature musos with top-end chops, their second album is heavy on self-indulgent, directionless irony like *Stroboscopic Fennel* and *Ouch! My OCD*. Nick Beggs does at least get some fine bass moments on *Wake Up Call* and the funky *Sibling Rivalry*. For the most part an instrumental, spaced-out circus, the best moments contain shape and lyrics, notably *Once Around The Sun With You* (featuring Rush guitarist Alex Lifeson) and *Canary In A Five And Dime*. Thankfully there are no 12-minute epics but, at 19 tracks, it lingers way too long. **Lee Campbell**

MICHAEL HEAD & THE RED ELASTIC BAND
LOOPHOLE

MODERN SKY

Michael Head has capitalised on the momentum generated by 2022's *Dear Scott* and renewed interest in his first band The Pale Fountains. Three months before releasing his memoir, *Ciao Ciao Bambino*, Head has plotted out another fine studio effort. Produced by Bill Ryder-Jones these tunes brim with well-crafted arrangements and orchestration. Strings thunder through *Shirl's Ghost*, while spicy horns decorate *Ciao Ciao Bambino* and *You're A Long Time Dead* feels like a lovingly restored antique. Head's late-career upswing continues apace. **AZ**

JUDIE TZUKE
JUDE THE UNSINKABLE

BIG MOON

While she's largely associated with her flirtation with pop stardom at the end of the 70s, it'd be fairer to think of Judie Tzuke as a gifted songwriter and someone whose voice has the power to make you stop and listen attentively. Tzuke's first solo album since 2017 offers plenty of moments where she makes this happen, notably on the stripped-back, folk-tinged *Idiot Kings* or the lush *Sunflowers*. At times, though, the collection seems too sonically in thrall to 80s AOR – especially jarring when a squalling guitar solo overwhelms the smoky electronica of opener *Unsinkable*. **JW**

ALFIE TEMPLEMAN
RADIOSOUL

CHESS CLUB

While Bedfordshire-raised Alfie Templeman's 2022 debut *Mellow Moon* was engagingly uplifting, it didn't prepare anyone for such a stratospheric leap above his peers for album two. Beck is an obvious touchstone, but only for being a genre-mashing maverick. *Hello Lonely* and *Drag* merge Was (Not Was), LCD Soundsystem and Phoenix to dizzying effect, while Nile Rodgers' guitar on *Just A Dance* is one of many delights on a summer whirlwind. Mastering featherlight acoustic pop in *Submarine* and grunge on *Switch* just because he can, Templeman emerges as a major talent. **JE**

VARIOUS ARTISTS
RUSTY EGAN PRESENTS BLITZED!

DEMON

★★★★★

AT LAST, THE DJ WHO SOUNDTRACKED A REVOLUTION IS READY TO SHARE HIS SECRETS. JUST DON'T ASK HIM IF HE INVENTED THE 80s.

© Peter Ashworth 1979

One word sums up a 4CD boxset of the music played at the Blitz club: *finally.*

No, really, that's all you need to know about the Blitz's resident founding DJ Rusty Egan belatedly getting to assemble his favourite Blitz moments: it's all here. Go and buy it right now and we'll see you back here for more hoopla once you're done. Come on, what are you waiting for?

Oh alright, if you will insist on some context: considering the Blitz's importance to Britain's cultural life, it's bizarre that it hasn't been fully documented before. If Egan doesn't quite accept that the Blitz invented the 80s as we know it, then by fomenting the likes of Spandau Ballet and Culture Club – not to mention having Grayson Perry, John Galliano, Siobhan Fahey, Philip Sallon and Stephen Linard among its regulars – Blitz absolutely played host to some pretty damn important figures.

Egan's ambivalence towards what followed the Blitz is natural. In every respect, his Visage bandmate Steve Strange was more of the club's public face. Ever since, the occasional idea for a Blitz compilation has involved Egan having to reject offers from chancers wanting him to churn out AN Other 80s rip-off featuring *Don't You Want Me* and *Tainted Love*, forgetting that the Blitz had been sold off in 1980 to become a restaurant before its founders had the chance to enjoy what they'd spawned.

Instead, Egan's 66 tracks accurately reflect what was played when David Bowie came in, Mick Jagger was turned away and Boy George was working in the cloakroom. There are big hitters: it starts out with *Being Boiled*, and naturally showcases *Fade To Grey* alongside *Radioactivity*, *To Cut A Long Story Short*, *Pop Muzik*, Japan, OMD, Sparks and Tubeway Army.

But where Egan's compilation excels is in being absolutely true to his Blitz spirit. Here are the European electronic offerings the DJ hoovered up on trips to Düsseldorf, Paris and Berlin: Gina X Performance, La Düsseldorf, Amanda Lear. Mixed in are avant-garde experiments that would never have been spun at a regular nightclub: Throbbing Gristle, Fad Gadget, Cabaret Voltaire, Suicide.

Just as importantly, Egan is keen to remind 80s students that the club was never intended to be exclusively a bolthole for futurists. If deranged fun like Jeff Wayne's *The Eve Of The War*, Lulu's melodramatic take on *The Man Who Sold The World* or the heightened frenzy of *I'm An Indian Too* by Don Armando's 2nd Avenue Rhumba Band sounded as glamorous as the clubbers looked, then on it went. It might not have invented the 80s, but the Blitz showed the way for *Classic Pop*. Thanks, Rusty. **John Earls**

BLANCMANGE
EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED: THE BEST OF BLANCMANGE 1979-2024

LONDON

★★★★☆

Since Blancmange started up again in 2011, Neil Arthur has released seven regular albums, plus five in the instrumental *Nil By Mouth* series, demo collection *Waiting Room*, reworkings set *Happy Families Too and* three further LPs with side-projects Near Future and Fader.

It's an incredible output for someone who only released one solo album after Blancmange split in 1986, but it's also been hard to keep track. Handily, the first regular Blancmange compilation since 2012 does a great job of showcasing how Arthur (sadly without original bandmate Stephen Luscombe since 2012 because of ill health) has kept the quality up.

While that 2012 set *The Very Best Of* was more exhaustive in compiling the first Blancmange era, *Everything Is Connected* makes up for lacking *I've Seen The Word* and *All Things Are Nice* with its 45-year overview. (Shame about the negligible 10-track vinyl edition.)

Like an English Dieter Meier, Arthur's distinctively quizzical Blackburn voice has sounded puzzled by both life's inconveniences and what he's doing singing pop music since the start. He can convey life's big emotions – Blancmange's cover of *The Day Before You Came* was way ahead of anyone else in hailing ABBA's genius – but the disconnect between Arthur's sternness and the giddiness of the music that he found himself embroiled in lit up Blancmange's first three albums.

© Helen Kincaid

Advances in technology have only bolstered Arthur's displacement in Blancmange 2.0. *Clean Your House* is a wonderful Xenomania-influenced fizzbomb, only improved by discussing the importance of domesticity.

The Fall justifies its eight-minute ode to Mark E Smith with its restless groove. *Reduced Voltage* is surely the greatest pop song about wanting a nap, offset by a squelchy *Funkytown* riff.

The 38-track compilation's new song finally sees Arthur record a tune he penned in pre-Blancmange band L360, the frenetic *Again, I Wait For The World* seemingly lifted from an episode of *Look Around You*. Arthur can be forgiven for not writing anything completely fresh. There'll probably be another new album ready by the time you finish reading this. **JE**

GIRLS ALOUD
WHAT WILL THE NEIGHBOURS SAY?

POLYDOR

★★★★☆

A year on from a thorough 20th anniversary reissue of *Sound Of The Underground*, Girls Aloud's second album arrives to coincide with their heart-warming reunion tour. The chemistry with Xenomania fully in place by 2004, a similarly comprehensive 3CD set confirms that, really, Girls Aloud were an albums band.

Sure, *Love Machine* is one of the noughties' finest singles: being kept off No.1 by Eric Prydz's *Call On Me* was the decade's *Vienna* vs *Shaddap You Face*. True, *Wake Me Up*'s visionary guitars invented Nu-Rave fully three years before Klaxons won the Mercury Prize.

But, while the Aloud's covers of *I'll Stand By You* and *Jump* (Pointer Sisters, not Van Halen) were better than they needed to be, the original songs elsewhere would have made for far more interesting singles. The *Love Machine* template of going absolutely bananas in the chorus was followed by *Here We Go* and *Thank Me Daddy*. *Deadlines & Diets* neatly diarised life in noughties pop via an arms-aloft ballad, a sway matched by *Hear Me Out*'s anthemics. Xenomania were frankly showing off in creating a tune as bulletproof as *Big Brother* and not bothering to make it a single.

The B-sides have a lot going on, too: a cover of *Hanging On The Telephone* is admittedly perfunctory, but *Androgynous Girls*' hectic beats screamed Imperial Phase. Even the previously unreleased *Disco Bunny* is a banger.

The album's only failing is the remixes: CD3's parade of in-house shenanigans under the aliases of Gravitas and Tony Lemezma showed Xenomania couldn't match PWL standards there. The sole external remixer, Manchester duo Flip & Fill, were regrettably basic in overhauling *The Show* and *Wake Me Up*.

Throw in a handful of edits for TV performances of the singles and Girls Aloud were making full use of their status. If *Deadlines & Diets* hinted at the band's intense workload, at least Brian Higgins' similarly stringent control in getting his Xenomaniacs to write bangers to order for Girls Aloud somehow worked. Album filler? Not under Higgins' watch. **JE**

© Lewis Mulatero

ELECTRIBE 101
ELECTRIBAL MEMORIES

DEMON

★★★★★

ONE OF THE RAVE ERA'S BIGGEST MYSTERIES RETAIN THEIR OTHERWORLDLY INTRIGUE, DESPITE A FABULOUSLY THOROUGH BOXSET FINALLY GIVING THEM THEIR DUE

Until Electribe 101's previously unreleased second album *Electribal Soul* finally emerged in 2022 after 30 years on Universal's shelves, via singer Billie Ray Martin's own label, the story of rave's most enigmatic band had been allowed to fade.

It's scandalous that Electribe 101's intrigue slowly dissipated. Commercially, their career is one of unfulfilled potential. Creatively, at least they managed to release one magnificent album. That it's taken 34 years to do anything with *Electribal Memories* is maddening. But at least Demon have done a superb job now it has finally re-emerged. Phonogram can be forgiven for not knowing where the Berlin/Birmingham five-piece belonged in 1990: trailblazing pop showing the way for ambient, electro and multi-octave frontwomen doesn't always fit next to SAW, even with Bros' manager overseeing your career.

While Tom Watkins just *might* have been a bad fit to manage Electribe 101, at least their remix A&R was on the case. The three bonus CDs with this reissue (also back on vinyl) are filled with remixers who saw which aspect of this multi-faceted band they could play with best. Larry Heard lets *Talking With Myself*'s piano run amok, having removed virtually everything apart from Martin's vocals. Kurtis Mantronik focuses on big drums, also giving *You're Walking* maximum filth in its squelchy bass. And Frankie Knuckles makes everything he touches five times brighter, because that's what Frankie Knuckles did.

The remixes needed to be golden, because the era comprised only eight different songs and one proper B-side (*Mummy I'm Sick, I'm Underwater*'s happy house horns going full Two Men A Drum Machine And A Trumpet.) The demos unearth the other marvel: a straight-up rave cover of Otis Redding's *That's How Strong My Love Is.* Billie Ray Martin adherents will know how enticing that is.

That Otis cover should have featured among their regular output, but maybe its simplicity squashed it. Martin's voice – part chanteuse, part *Cabaret*, part soul, part country, somehow always belonging on the dancefloor – is mysterious enough. In the Midlands, she found bandmates creating mesmerising grooves to match. If 1990's public weren't ready, anyone who's cherished them since is likely to still be slightly in awe of an LP that still hasn't given up all its secrets. They were The Associates of the rave era. How wonderful they've finally got a release worthy of their legend. **JE**

SPARKS/NOËL
NO. 1 IN HEAVEN / IS THERE MORE TO LIFE THAN DANCING?

LIL' BEETHOVEN

★★★★★ / ★★★½

At the start of 1979, the Mael brothers had grown bored of their traditional set-up. After expressing an interest in hooking up with Giorgio Moroder, whose work with Donna Summer had explored the possibilities of a guitar-free future, Sparks soon found themselves at his Munich studio working on their eighth LP.

Despite returning Sparks to the Top 20 after a four-year absence with its almost title track and the seismic *Beat The Clock*, the album fared less well with critics. It spent one whole week at No.73.

Fortunately, the aheadness of the Maels – Joy Division were big fans – was rewarded over time. It's now one of Sparks' best-known albums, rightly cited as being key to the birth of synth-pop. Reissued with a bonus CD of edits and remixes, *No.1 In Heaven* is both an ecstatic masterpiece for those who knew the future when they saw it and a joyful introduction to Sparks' worldview for those who weren't there 45 years ago.

Meanwhile, Noël's *Is There More To Life Than Dancing?* followed shortly after. Written and produced by Ron and Russell, it was heavily influenced by their time with Moroder. Not much is known about Noël herself, other than that she was from Los Angeles. So vague are her biographical details, there were rumours she was in reality Russell Mael. Her sole album has long become something of a holy grail for Sparks fans, so an official reissue has been a long time coming – bootlegs based on ripped audio from the original vinyl have long circulated.

A Sparks album in all but name – the duo introduced the elegant *Dancing Is Dangerous* into their own sets several years ago – you could imagine both *The Night They Invented Love* and *Au Revoir* on *No.1 In Heaven*. Happily, for this reissue Sparks and their record label have finally managed to track Noël down to write sleevenotes: she might now get some form of due.

A genuine curio – and one that you can dance to. **Ian Wade**

AIR
MOON SAFARI

PARLOPHONE

★★★★

Air's debut full-length arrived in 1998, as the easy listening revival expired and downtempo, ambient and trip-hop music began to merge beneath the chillout umbrella. The French duo accelerated this metamorphosis, gracefully blending downbeat electronica, film scores, pop, easy listening (of course!) and even jazz. What made them stand out, however, was their work's humanity: it didn't sound like machines had made it.

As it happens, *Moon Safari* didn't use samples at all. Instead, it employed Nicolas Godin and Jean-Benoît Dunckel's influences as a platform for musical experimentalism. Amid their electronic instrumentation, one could detect early-70s Serge Gainsbourg in the basslines of both *La Femme D'Argent* and *Talisman*, the latter's keyboards also echoing Bob James' 1978 classic *Angela*, aka *Taxi*'s haunting theme tune, while *Ce Matin-Là*'s opening guitars would have suited Harry Nilsson and its trombone Burt Bacharach.

A mid-70s Francis Lai soundtrack might claim *Le Voyage De Pénélope*, too, and they even collaborated with veteran electronic composer Jean-Jacques Perrey on *Remember*'s lush robo-pop, though it's hardly a highlight.

There's more here, however, than musical references. *Sexy Boy*'s Moogs and vocoders lent the charts a welcome, cute sophistication, while *Kelly Watch The Stars*' synthetic melody and squidgy keyboard runs provided a second Top 20 hit. Admittedly, Beth Hirsch's delicate contributions can't quite rescue the somewhat aimless *All I Need* and *You Make It Easy*, but the album's otherwise overwhelmingly seductive nature proved monumentally, justifiably influential.

Accompanying this 25th anniversary edition is Mike Mills' previously available black-and-white documentary, *Eating, Sleeping, Waiting And Playing*, which further humanises Air – perhaps too much, given the monotony of touring rituals, vox pops and mumbled Franglais.

Bonus tracks are also underwhelming: Funkadelic's *Maggot Brain* is transformed live into Pink Floyd and there's a distinctive remix of Neneh Cherry's *Kootchi*, but a BBC session delivers a punk rock *Kelly Watch The Stars* and electro *Sexy Boy* that might be better forgotten. **Wyndham Wallace**

VARIOUS ARTISTS
NOW YEARBOOK 74 / NOW YEARBOOK 90 EXTRA / NOW 12" 80s: 1982 PART 2 / NOW 80s DANCEFLOOR: R&B & FUNK

NOW

★★★★★ / ★★★★☆ / ★★★★½ / ★★★★☆

1974 saw Bacofoil bangers The Sweet and Slade from the previous year's glam explosion give way to Mud to almost bookend the year with the giant *Tiger Feet* and *Lonely This Christmas*, while a rock'n'roll revival offered Showaddywaddy and The Rubettes' glorious *Sugar Baby Love*, plus the oncoming mania of The Bay City Rollers.

The beginnings of disco came from George McRae's mighty *Rock Your Baby*, The Hues Corporation's *Rock The Boat* and the hysterical Disco Tex & His Sex-O-Lettes' *Get Dancin'*, next to luxurious soul-pop by The Stylistics, Barry White and The Three Degrees.

All these moods are on *Now Yearbook 74*, along with some novelties – *Kung Fu Fighting*, *The Wombling Song*, the gloomsome *Seasons In The Sun* – and oldies-radio staples *How Long*, *You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet*, *Candle In The Wind* and *The Air That I Breathe*. Sequenced superbly, it's a solid gold collection.

© Getty

Having shown how colourful 1990 was with the main volume, *Now Yearbook 90 Extra* arrives with a further scoop around the year to offer a 58-track 3CD. If you thought the original edition mopped up everything, try brilliance like *Doin' The Do*, *Deep In Vogue* and The Beloved's still incredible *Hello*.

Now 12" 80s: 1982 was so brimful of fabulousness that a second volume is called for. It's another sizzler, with evocative extended mixes from headline acts – *Young Guns*, *Poison Arrow*, *Hungry Like The Wolf* – next to vibers too often overlooked: David Christie's *Saddle Up*, Monsoon's *Ever So Lonely* and The Mood's *Don't Stop*.

Rounding off Now's batch, the *80s Dancefloor* series gets funky on the vinyl-only *R&B And Funk*. You can't argue with Mtume's *Juicy Fruit*, René And Angela's *I'll Be Good* or Cameo's *Word Up*. There's also a rare groove eruption via Maceo And The Macks' *Cross The Tracks* and the ecstatic *I Believe In Miracles* by The Jacksons. Get on *down*, party people. **IW**

KEANE
HOPES AND FEARS

ISLAND

★★★★☆

Currently writing a new album which the quartet say will be lighter than 2019's introspective comeback *Cause And Effect*, Keane celebrate the 20th anniversary of their debut with a solid reissue, adding 12 B-sides to CD2/LP2 and a disc of demos for every album track on the 3CD set.

The package highlights how many strong tunes the then-trio had amassed: having done their time on the pub circuit and single-only indie labels before Island finally signed them, *Hopes And Fears* sounded ready for arenas largely because Keane were writing anthems trying to outgrow their surroundings: a live disc from the era would have been a welcome CD4.

At a time now when too many singer-songwriters sound like knock-offs of Tom Chaplin, it's easy to forget how Keane stood out in 2004, in a scene dominated by the more raucous Kasabian and The Libertines. Keane have been proved right: not only have *Everybody's Changing* and *This Is The Last Time* become familiar classics, but *We Might As Well Be Strangers* and *Your Eyes Open* are similarly emotional, while the friskier *Can't Stop Now* hinted at the galloping *Crystal Ball* and *Is It Any Wonder?* that followed.

While Noel Gallagher inevitably dismissed them, Tim Rice-Oxley says Keane had Oasis as their benchmark for B-sides: borne out by Chaplin's stirring vocals on *She Opens Her Eyes*. **JE**

TINA TURNER
WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT

RHINO

★★★★☆

First released to coincide with the same-named 1993 biopic in which Angela Bassett very much "did the thing", *What's Love Got To Do With It* helped Tina Turner to wrestle back narrative control from her abusive ex-husband: half of its 14 songs are solo remakes of the classics such as *Nutbush City Limits* and *Shake A Tail Feather* that The Ike And Tina Turner Revue tore up the R&B circuit with.

While Ike was trading on former glories, the Top 20 success of the Lulu-penned late-career highlight *I Don't Wanna Fight* and cover of The Trammps' *Disco Inferno* proved that, even into her 50s, Turner was a chart force to be reckoned with.

This 30th anniversary edition wisely remains Ike-less in its second disc of remixes, instrumentals and oddities, as well as the two-disc live recording of Tina's 1993 show at San Bernardino's Blockbuster Pavilion and its accompanying DVD. Hardcore fans will be most interested in the spellbinding a cappella version of *Proud Mary* and Tony Dofat edit of *Why Must We Wait Until Tonight*, both previously unreleased. Everyone else will simply marvel at how the leg-shimmying icon was thriving a full decade on from one of pop's all-time best comebacks. **Jon O'Brien**

FLOWERED UP
A LIFE WITH BRIAN

LONDON

★★★★☆

It's slightly stretching a point to call this the first reissue of Flowered Up's sole studio album: such is the scarcity of their material, 2005's *Best Of* was basically the 1991 original LP, with their seminal rave anthem *Weekender* tagged on to the end. But, having been freshly remastered by keyboardist Tim Dorney, and with a welcome second disc of remixes and B-sides, here is the definitive document of a band whose infectious blend of baggy and acid house saw them dubbed

(somewhat reductively) "the London Happy Mondays".

This time, we get no fewer than *four* versions of *Weekender* – though several are WINO (*Weekender* In Name Only), and nothing comes close to the sweat-soaked, 5am euphoria of the 13-minute original. *A Life With Brian* itself, meanwhile, stands as a fitting monument to the late Maher brothers, with Liam's distinctive vocals and Joe's squally guitar bringing a proper swagger to the likes of *It's On* ("Soniiia!") – still surely the grooviest song ever built around the pan pipes.

Three decades later, it's hard not to be struck by the poignancy of a record filled with such joyous, youthful energy: the sound of a bunch of council estate kids who burned brightly but all-too-briefly, before paying a tragic price for the hedonistic lifestyle that they so brilliantly captured on record. **Paul Kirkley**

BELINDA CARLISLE
DECADES VOLUME 3: CORNUCOPIA

EDSEL

★★★★☆

In lieu of a new Belinda Carlisle studio album, Edsel are doing an admirable job collating her back catalogue. After the first two volumes covered her studio LPs, this 4CD sweeps up the albums' accompanying extras: sundry B-sides, soundtrack work and various odds and ends.

Very much a mixed bag, then. The first two CDs include a fairly

straight cover of *Jealous Guy*, a duet with Freda Payne on *Band Of Gold* that's hamstrung by its tinny mid-80s production, and coulda-been singles like *Love Walks In* and *Whatcha Doin' To Me?* Best of all is a startling Prodigy-style version of The Sex Pistols' *Submission*: a reminder that Carlisle has a punk past as authentic as anyone's.

Then there's a CD of the 7" mixes of the hits, plus 11 live tracks, but the big selling point for fans will be the material she recorded between 2013-21 with producer Gabe Lopez. Many of these ended up as extra tracks on hits collections or anniversary editions, so the heartwrenching *Why* and a spirited cover of The Youngbloods' *Get Together* would be unknown to all but the most determined completist. Now, with this thorough mopping-up exercise, the Carlisle cupboard looks truly bare. So how about that new album? **Beth Simpson**

CHINA CRISIS
CHINA GREATNESS

LAST NIGHT FROM GLASGOW

★★★★☆

Still awaiting their place in the pantheon of 80s greats, China Crisis follow last year's vinyl reissue of 1982's *Difficult Shapes & Passive Rhythms* with a 2LP/deluxe CD compilation providing multiple opportunities to celebrate their bittersweet strengths, sometimes overlooked or even dismissed as nostalgically indulgent.

They're taking no risks, though: their studied but jaunty pop, once undercut by both their political leanings and unashamedly sentimental tendencies, is given

a spit polish here, with a dozen tracks rebuilt by Gary Daly and Eddie Lundon alongside producer Mark Phythian, while string and brass arrangements arrive via keyboardist Jack Hymers and saxophonist Eric Animan.

These enhancements can be subtle, as on the breezy *Black Man Ray*, or immediate, as the orchestral flourishes opening the perky *King In A Catholic Style* demonstrate, while the once early OMD-like, now much more lavish *Papua* is bedecked with a glittering, brassy bridge.

Papua is re-presented as one of a further eight remixes, too, its rhythm tracks sacrificed for lavish arrangements via the Pacific Mix, a shoo-in for a Sofia Coppola film, and their debut album's *Christian*'s simple synth-pop is transformed into an elegiac, minimalist ballad. They keep the best to last, with *The Understudy* now extravagantly, irresistibly jolly. All hail their *China Greatness*. **WW**

THE DURUTTI COLUMN
VINI REILLY

LONDON

★★★★½

Critics have spent 40 years casting Vini Reilly as a guitar god and tragic, sometimes inadvertently self-destructive figure, but these are distractions from his unique, timeless artistry. Even those who are persuaded, however, find the Tony Wilson protégé's catalogue hard to negotiate. Well, skip to 1989, when this LP joined 1980 debut *The Return Of...* and 1987's *The Guitar And Other Machines* as a perfect introduction to his charms.

Now available as a 5CD boxset (including four unreleased tracks) and, in the original rejected

sleeve, a Record Store Day vinyl edition, the parent album's magic is encapsulated by *Otis*, whose Tracy Chapman and Otis Redding samples enrich bubbling synths and spider-webbed guitar melodies. Not enough? Try *Opera 1* and *Opera 2*'s eerie fragility or *People's Pleasure Park*'s driving funk, though prepare to be floored by the moving *Requiem Again*.

Demos on the CD package include *Sample Tune*, its choral voices enhancing filigree guitar lines, while the formerly limited edition *Sporadic Recordings* includes the motorik *Rob Gray's Elegy*, intended to be celebratory.

There's also a WOMAD show, with a demonstration of Reilly's infamous vocals on *Red Shoes*, while an endearingly lo-fi, sometimes raucous 1989 live DVD underlines drummer Bruce Mitchell's vital contributions. On no account, too, miss Reilly's memorably unseemly Morrissey collaboration on the 3" disc. **WW**

THE CURE
PARIS

POLYDOR

★★★★☆

A year after the hits-centred *Show* from 1992, the same year's gig from Paris arena Le Zenith is also reissued on CD/2LP. Adding previously unreleased intense versions of *Shake Dog Shake* and *Hot Hot Hot!!!*, *Paris* is generally more hypnotic than *Show*. Although *Close To Me* is teasing, the *Wish* line-up mostly enjoy rumbling around The Cure's cultier, doomier moments. Brooding and beautiful, with a heart-stopping *Catch*, mix it with *Show* for a fabulous light and shade live album worthy of their current epic concerts. **JE**

MANIC STREET PREACHERS
LIFEBLOOD

SONY

★★★★☆

The Manics' only album since *Generation Terrorists* to miss the UK Top 10, *Lifeblood*'s evocation of Big Music has aged superbly, its 80s mood enhanced by *A Song For Departure* recalling *Little Lies* – rounded off by *1985* remixes from Gwenno (think Martin Hannett) and Steven Wilson's none-more-Arthur Baker take. Finally back on vinyl, the 3CD set adds demos, a BBC session and bonus tracks: Nicky Wire's spoken shoegaze mirage *Failure Bound* is one of the great Manics B-sides. Long overdue its moment. **JE**

CRANES
FUSE

DADAPHONIC

★★★★☆

Pitched somewhere between early Banshees and Cocteau Twins having a bad day after falling down a well, Cranes were an odd proposition. Nowhere is that truer than on *Fuse*, laid down on a four-track and released solely on cassette in 1986. If it seems incongruous that a DIY demo-cum-LP has now been remastered at Abbey Road, it's worth pointing out these reissued recordings are of far more than historical value. Rather, they reveal a young band fearlessly experimenting and producing music that's densely textured and eerie. **Jonathan Wright**

XMAL DEUTSCHLAND
THE EARLY SINGLES

SACRED BONES

★★★★☆

Formed in Hamburg in 1980, Xmal Deutschland confounded expectations by sounding formidable almost straight away. The all-female five-piece's debut single *Schwarze Welt*, originally released on local label ZickZack – home to Einstürzende Neubauten and DAF for a time – is a stomping opening with crunching guitars and tribal drumming, a perfect specimen of the German New Wave. As these 1981-82 songs demonstrate, Xmal enriched their music with nascent electronics on tracks such as *Incubus Succubus*, helping to invent goth. **Jeremy Allen**

LOOPER
UP A TREE

MUTE

★★★★☆

A cult classic from 1999, made when he was still Belle And Sebastian's bassist, Stuart David's debut album with his wife Karn is a cut-and-paste delight. Spoken word, lo-fi glam and potential kids TV themes build up to the title track, whose "La-la-la-la" refrain remains a call to the dancefloor for any indie fan of the era. The new 2CD edition (also finally getting the album on vinyl) adds three new mixes plus rarities including Pulp's faintly sinister six-minute wicca folk remix of *Up A Tree*. Sampledelia never sounded so childlike. **JE**

LAURA BRANIGAN
BRANIGAN

MUSIC ON VINYL

★★★☆☆

It's a puzzle as to why some singles hit big, only for the album they're attached to sink like the Bismark. So it was with *Gloria*, Laura Branigan's 1982 chart-storming cover of Umberto Tozzi's anaemic original. Despite peaking at No.6 in the UK, her debut album bombed over here. Which is a surprise as there's nothing on this bombastic, big-voiced offering – now back out on vinyl – that's any different to her signature song. "If you liked *Gloria*," *Branigan*'s tagline should have read, "then you'll find this album perfectly acceptable." **Steve O'Brien**

THE TOY DOLLS
THE SINGLES

CHERRY RED

★★★½☆

Infamously, the Sunderland punks' version of *Nellie The Elephant* gatecrashed the Top 10 at Christmas 1984, seeing them rub shoulders with Band Aid, Madonna and Wham! in one of the most competitive charts of all time. If Nellie made you smile, then this 2CD will see you grinning madly. It's ramalama pop-punk all the way for 37 songs, with Dolls' originals like *We're Mad*, *Deirdre's A Slag* and the brilliantly sick *I've Got Asthma* jostling for space with their versions of *Livin' La Vida Loca* and *Rupert The Bear*. Puerile, very silly, but ultimately good fun. **BS**

GARBAGE
BLEED LIKE ME

BMG

★★½☆☆

As well-reviewed as it was on its release in 2001, Garbage's third album *Beautiful Garbage* alarmed many rock purists with its excursions into electronica. Perhaps stung by their fanbase's reaction, Shirley Manson's gang went back to their post-grunge roots for 2005's follow-up – only the results are less interesting. While its predecessor felt more open-minded, album four, reissued with a second CD of B-sides, remixes and demos, is much more meat and potatoes. A collection of thrashy rock workouts, only the swooning *It's All Over But The Crying* breaks the sonic monotony. **SO**

© Dave Freak

ABC & THE SOUTHBANK SINFONIA

SYMPHONY HALL, BIRMINGHAM

12 FEBRUARY

★★★★½

MARTIN FRY AND ANNE DUDLEY REUNITE TO BRING THE LUSH ORCHESTRATIONS OF ABC'S LANDMARK DEBUT ALBUM, *THE LEXICON OF LOVE*, TO VIVID LIFE

If you're going to hire a full orchestra to perform one 1980s pop album, it has to be *The Lexicon Of Love*.

Brimming with luscious arrangements and sweeping melodies, it's easy to see why Martin Fry's called on classical musicians several times, with the latest (sold out) stint rolling on from 2022's 40th anniversary run.

But before we get to ABC's 40 minute-ish 1982 debut, Fry, his 'pop' band, and conductor/arranger Anne Dudley, make the most of a stage packed with strings, brass and percussion for a selection of other ABC material.

Given a symphonic upgrade, *When Smokey Sings* works perfectly, as (naturally) do the selections from 2016's satisfactory *Lexicon Of Love II* (*The Flames Of Desire*, *The Love Inside The Love*, *Ten Below Zero*). Yet with the punchy and precise rhythms of the original removed *(How To Be A) Millionaire* feels slightly overblown, while the loved-up anthem, *One Better World*, rambles rather than raves. Nonetheless, the opening set reinforces the idea that ABC were far more than *Lexicon*, with 1985's *Be Near Me* one of the night's highlights.

Then, it's the main event.

Let's not beat about the bush. *The Lexicon Of Love* isn't just one of the best albums of 1982, it's one of the best albums, period, with a masterful mix of clipped funk, smooth soul, easy-listening and pop. And it was radical, too. As disco's string arrangements were replaced by machine-powered grooves, and punk's DIY attitude fuelled numerous genres, ABC's orchestral move was audacious and indulgent (yet never pompous or overblown), with Fry's musical persona recalling such then unhip crooners as Matt Monro, Johnny Mathis and Motown soulsters. There was little romance in the New Romantics' cold monophonic synthesizers, but here was genuine romance that could sweep you off your feet... And 42 years later, it still has that same power.

No one seems unmoved by the track-by-track recreation, with the entire hall (Sinfonia members included) grinning for the show's duration. Sampling tech has made great strides since the 80s, but nothing fills a grand venue like real brass and real strings.

Poison Arrow is right on-target tonight, as is *Tears Are Not Enough*, but it's Side Two Track One's *The Look Of Love* which has everyone standing.

"That felt like an encore... but we've got more tracks to do," Fry declares before leading into *Date Stamp* – which, with slapping bass, chiming guitar and percussion, roadtests some of the ideas *Lexicon* producer Trevor Horn would expand two years later with Frankie Goes To Hollywood.

Flipping the album's last two vocal songs around, Fry wraps up with the burping *4 Ever 2 Gether* (the weakest album cut tonight) and a gorgeous *All Of My Heart*. With no more material, an extended *The Look Of Love* encore is welcomed enthusiastically again before bows and flowers.

The Lexicon Of Love was pure class in 1982 and is still pure class today. If you're going to experience those songs live, there's no better way to hear them than this. Gorgeous. **Dave Freak**

SETLIST

1. Overture
2. When Smokey Sings
3. Viva Love
4. The Night You Murdered Love
5. (How To Be A) Millionaire
6. The Flames Of Desire
7. The Love Inside The Love
8. Ten Below Zero
9. One Better World
10. Ocean Blue
11. Be Near Me

SET TWO: THE LEXICON OF LOVE

12. Show Me
13. Poison Arrow
14. Many Happy Returns
15. Tears Are Not Enough
16. Valentine's Day
17. The Look Of Love (Part One)
18. Date Stamp
19. 4 Ever 2 Gether
20. All Of My Heart

ENCORE

21. The Look Of Love (Part Four)
22. The Look Of Love (Part One)

© Dave Freak

OMD
THE CIVIC AT THE HALLS, WOLVERHAMPTON

15 MARCH

★★★★☆

ANDY'S ILL, BUT ORCHESTRAL MANOEUVRES IN THE DARK STILL SOUND LIKE THEY'RE AT THE TOP OF THEIR GAME

Like Blancmange, Soft Cell and Depeche Mode, OMD continue to enjoy a late-career renaissance. Since their reformation in 2006, there's been a gentle, consistent upward trajectory, with back catalogue LPs reassessed and 2017's *The Punishment Of Luxury* earning the band their first Top 5 album since 1991's Andy McCluskey-only *Sugar Tax*. Now *Bauhaus Staircase*, their fourth post-reunion record, has hit No.2, making it their all-time highest-placing UK chart album.

Support act were relative newcomers, Walt Disco, who've previously opened for fellow Glaswegians Simple Minds and Brum's Duran Duran. Although their opening salvo felt a little low-key, the young five-piece soon upped the ante with the angular punk-funk of *Cut Your Hair, Come Undone*, the exaggerated la-la-la of *How Cool Are You?*, and grand synth clatter of *Weightless*.

Swaggering in white vest and Oxford bags, frontman Jocelyn recalls a *Young Americans*-era Bowie, while his vocal inflections echo such similarly idiosyncratic singers as The Associates' Billy Mackenzie and Classix Nouveaux's Sal Solo. An all too brief set, but one that bodes well for second album, *The Warping*.

OMD arrived to *Evolution Of Species*, a sweeping song on the theme of extinction. Dotted with pre-recorded voices, it gives time for McCluskey and Paul Humphreys, plus keyboardist Martin Cooper and drummer Stuart Kershaw, to get into place, and slides nicely into *Bauhaus Staircase*'s similarly hard-hitting track *Anthropocene*.

While *Messages* and *Tesla Girls* are easy wins, another *Bauhaus Staircase* cut, *Kleptocracy*, fizzes with a vibrancy and freshness, as does *History Of Modern (Part 1)*. "Now it feels like we're rocking!" cries Andy. And he's right.

Off the back of *Pretty In Pink*'s smooth *If You Leave*, Andy takes the opportunity for a gentle poke at Paul. "I'll do the easy bit," he jests as the two swap places for *(Forever) Live And Die*. "You come down here and do some work."

Pounding instrumental, *The Rock Drill* – inspired by the Jacob Epstein sculpture – ushers in two more new tunes before the show's train/boat/plane-powered conclusion, and their "oldest and fastest song", 1979's call for solar power, *Electricity*.

Twice in the set, Andy confesses he's unwell, and although his distinctive dancing and vocals occasionally feel a little dialled-back, he nonetheless gives it his all. It's a well-rounded, solid performance, with never a wrong step. Even a pause – after a medical emergency in the crowd – doesn't dampen the flow.

If *Bauhaus Staircase* is to be OMD's final LP (as rumoured), then it looks like they're going out on a genuine high. **Dave Freak**

SETLIST

1. Evolution Of Species
2. Anthropocene
3. Messages
4. Tesla Girls
5. Kleptocracy
6. History Of Modern (Part I)
7. If You Leave
8. (Forever) Live And Die
9. Bauhaus Staircase
10. Souvenir
11. Joan Of Arc
12. Joan Of Arc (Maid Of Orleans)
13. The Rock Drill
14. Veruschka
15. Healing
16. Don't Go
17. So In Love
18. Dreaming
19. Locomotion
20. Sailing On The Seven Seas
21. Enola Gay

ENCORE

22. Look At You Now
23. Pandora's Box
24. Electricity

LUST FOR LIFE
O2 ACADEMY BIRMINGHAM

6 MARCH

★★★☆☆

The world of tribute bands is pretty crowded, but Lust For Life stand above many, offering substantially more credibility points than most thanks to a line-up of musicians with a solid connection to the source.

Essentially a tribute to Iggy Pop's 1977 solo album (and his second David Bowie collaboration) *Lust For Life*, at the centre of the band are guitarist Kevin Armstrong and Blondie's rhythm section – drummer Clem Burke and bassist (and ex-Sex Pistol) Glen Matlock – all of whom have previously worked with Iggy. They're joined by Luís Correia (an associate of Bowie guitarist Earl Slick and pal of Spandau's Steve Norman) and keyboard player Florence Sabeva (from Heaven 17 and Earl Slick's *Station To Station* tour), while taking the unenviable task of lead vocalist is Katie Puckrik. Yes, the former presenter from 1990's TV series *The Word*, and the real unknown quantity tonight.

It takes a few tunes to get going, but with a crack band of musicians around her, Puckrik throws herself into the role with a twitching, sneering gusto. She doesn't try to copy Iggy, yet brings a drawl and attitude that's hard to ignore. By the time *The Passenger* rolls in, it's fair to say the singer – and former Pet Shop Boys dancer – has won over most doubters.

Once the album is finished, the setlist broadens slightly as Puckrik delivers an Iggy-flavoured *China Girl* and Armstrong steps up for *Absolute Beginners*. The guitarist – who played on third Bowie/Iggy collab *Blah Blah Blah* and with Tin Machine – recalls how he first got the call from David, and how the film-related song developed.

Further Bowie tunes follow, including a decent take on *Station To Station*'s *Stay*.

It's not all perfect – Blondie hit *Hanging On The Telephone* and Matlock's *Pretty Vacant* are a little bit loose – but side-stepping both parody and novelty, *Lust For Life* can't help but induce a smile. All aboard for funtime. **DF**

THE GIG CARTEL

THEGIGCARTEL.COM // THE HOME OF GREAT CONCERTS THEGIGCARTEL.COM

© Pete Cadman

ALISON GOLDFRAPP
GATESHEAD GLASSHOUSE ICM

22 FEBRUARY

★★★★☆

SETLIST

1. In Electric Blue
2. Love Invention
3. Believer
4. Digging Deeper Now
5. So Hard So Hot
6. Number 1
7. Impossible
8. Ride A White Horse
9. Beautiful
10. The Beat Divine
11. Gatto Gelato
12. NeverStop
13. Rocket

ENCORE

14. Alive
15. Ooh La La
16. Strict Machine
17. Fever (This Is The Real Thing)

THE SYNTH-POP SIREN'S SOLO TOUR IS A JOYOUS CELEBRATION THAT DELIVERS DANCE ANTHEMS APLENTY, THRILLING BOTH THE CROWD AND THE STAR HERSELF

In the 25 years since she teamed up with Will Gregory to form the shapeshifting duo that takes her name, Alison Goldfrapp's musical output has veered from cinematic soundscapes to scintillating synth-pop, rustic folk to pounding glam rock among others.

However, for her solo debut album last year Alison aimed squarely at the dancefloor. *The Love Invention* delivered a wave of grooves oozing with sensuality, yearning and sheer euphoria – all clearly designed for consumption in communal ecstasy.

Kicking off her tour at Gateshead's Glasshouse ICM, the stage is appropriately bathed in cerulean hues for the shimmering opener, *In Electric Blue*. A commanding figure in a structured black trouser suit embellished with sequinned accents courtesy of Nue Studios, Alison prowls the stage delivering an accomplished 90-minute set in which her new material nestles seamlessly alongside highlights from the Goldfrapp canon plus a few welcome surprises.

The rubbery bassline of *NeverStop*, Italo house of *Gatto Gelato*, pulsating throb of *So Hard So Hot* and hypnotic charge of *Digging Deeper Now* all fizz with an effervescence that sees them reach their full potential in a live setting thanks to the backing of a three-piece band and two dancers. With a focus very clearly on creating the ambience of a sweaty club, the BPM rarely drops, with only *Number 1*, rightfully received as a long-lost classic, lowering the pace.

Of the Goldfrapp inclusions, tempo was obviously paramount when it came to choosing the songs for the setlist. Creating a cohesion with the club-friendly flavour of *The Love Invention*, the duo's more upbeat moments are favoured including, most surprisingly, three tracks from *Head First*, an album that Alison has previously been dismissive of. Having warmed to it fairly recently, she is unable to hide her delight at the thunderous reception to *Rocket*. Another big surprise comes with the inclusion of *Beautiful* – the stomping *Supernature*-era hidden gem long regarded as a firm fan favourite.

Emerging back onstage having changed into a stunning Alexandre Vauthier jacket, the encore is a non-stop rush of electro-euphoria with *Alive* slipping into the glam-inflected behemoth *Ooh La La*. The menacing rumble of *Strict Machine* builds to a shattering climax before the Balearic-flavoured *Fever (This Is The Real Thing)* ends the show on a note of pure elation.

A celebration of the old and the new, the most revelatory aspect of tonight's performance is the evolution of Alison as a performer, which sees her engaging with her audience more than ever before.

Having witnessed Goldfrapp live at various points during the past two decades, the frustrating lack of audience interaction in many cases has been the only downside to otherwise faultless performances. Whether it's down to experience or a newfound confidence, the Alison we see here happily compliments fans' outfits and partakes in banter with the crowd – however awkward ("You've still got a Lovely Head, Alison" someone calls out rather embarrassingly), despite admitting to opening night nerves. The icy stage persona may have thawed considerably, but Goldfrapp ends the show with her inherent cool factor still firmly intact. **Mark Lindores**

ABBA ON RECORD: PACKAGED, PROMOTED, REVIEWED
CARL MAGNUS PALM

CMP TEXT

★★★★★

In what is sure to be a monumental year in the history of ABBA – it is now half a century since their Eurovision win – Carl Magnus Palm once again asserts himself as the premier documentarian of the iconic Swedish group's oeuvre.

Following the definitive biography, *Bright Lights Dark Shadows* and *The Complete Recording Sessions* – as concise an overview of their studio work as you are ever likely to get, comes *ABBA On Record*, a superb companion to the latter. This latest work provides a fascinating insight into what went into ABBA's recordings once they left the studio, discussing the many marketing decisions involved in turning a song into a hit.

Packed with the detail we've come to expect from Palm, he examines every release from ABBA's debut to 2021's *Voyage* LP. As well as drawing from original source material and reviews, he has conducted countless interviews with record label staff, photographers and the designers who worked on the releases to form a stunning exhibition of ABBA's visual identity.

Illustrated with record sleeves, outtakes and promo material, plus behind-the scenes studio shots, this is a complete triumph and treasure trove of information that will be devoured by ABBA fans. If only every act had someone like Palm to maintain their legacy. **Mark Lindores**

THE REJECTS: AN ALTERNATIVE HISTORY OF POPULAR MUSIC
JAMIE COLLINSON

CONSTABLE

★★★½

Despite being billed as "an alternative history of popular music", the cast of *The Rejects* contains an array of household names. Delving in, the sub-heading becomes clear as it's a collection of brief biographies of the almost famous – those musicians dismissed from their duties as bands were on the cusp of success – and therefore often erased from official histories.

Despite a wide range of genres, the reasons for ejecting band members are largely universal – not fitting an image, a clash of personalities, behavioural issues and substance abuse seem to be the key issues.

Drawing from over two decades working in the industry, Collinson has been privy to insider info that he pours into entries for artists as diverse as Arctic Monkeys, Nirvana, The Beatles and The Supremes. Also featured are the likes of Sugababes, The Rolling Stones, The Human League, and Sex Pistols. Many of the greats apparently had differing pre-fame line-ups and Fleetwood Mac have a whole chapter dedicated to their countless formations over the decades. A cautionary tale with an often tragic turn, *The Rejects* paints a picture that exemplifies why the music business is deemed one of the most ruthless. **ML**

SPRINGSTEEN: ALBUM BY ALBUM
RYAN WHITE

PALAZZO

★★★★

Published to coincide with The Boss' impending 75th birthday and the fact he has overcome the health problems that forced a halt to his tour last year and will be packing our stadiums again this summer, *Springsteen: Album By Album* commemorates his incredible body of work that now spans 50+ years.

Kicking off with 1973's *Greetings From Astbury Park, N.J.*, White takes a chronological deep dive into each of Bruce's 21 studio albums up to his most recent, 2022's *Only The Strong Survive*. In each case, the LP's inspiration and creation are explored in detail along with archival interviews and reviews for an authoritative overview on each. A timeline of significant dates snakes through each chapter, marking releases, live performances, award shows and other Springsteen milestones. A concluding section of complete personnel, recording dates and chart positions will satisfy stats fans. Aside from the well-researched and well-written LP breakdowns, the book is lavishly illustrated with shots of Bruce's galvanising live shows jostling for prominence with iconic Springsteen portraiture courtesy of Lynn Goldsmith and Neal Preston among others as well as memorabilia and magazine covers. Whether you're a casual observer or ardent acolyte, *Springsteen: Album By Album* strikes the right balance of being all-encompassing without being overwhelming. It's got something for everyone. **ML**

BOWIE ODYSSEY 74
SIMON GODDARD

OMNIBUS PRESS

★★★★½

The latest instalment in Simon Goddard's scintillating series of yearly David Bowie check-ins finds its subject at a crossroads in both his career and personal life, torn between a still-swinging London with his wife Angie and the mean streets of New York with his paramour Ava Cherry.

Now midway through the 70s, this latest volume highlights Bowie's tendency to shapeshift and his reluctance to become part of any scene. Having epitomised glam rock, the genre has become the defining force both musically and culturally and is bordering on self-parody when David seeks out his next destination. A performance by Barry White and The Three Degrees lures him towards the lush sound of Philadelphia, with its influence creeping into the transitional *Diamond Dogs* album.

The facts and statistics of Bowie's career have been put on the page countless times at this point, but it is Goddard's exquisite writing style that elevates his story. He massages the facts into a beautifully written, transcendent tapestry embroidered with figures and events – political, societal and cultural, and then examines the superstar's place within them.

Heralding a new era and one of the most debauched periods of the artist formerly known as Ziggy Stardust's life, *Bowie Odyssey 74* is an integral addition to the story so far. **ML**

© Alamy

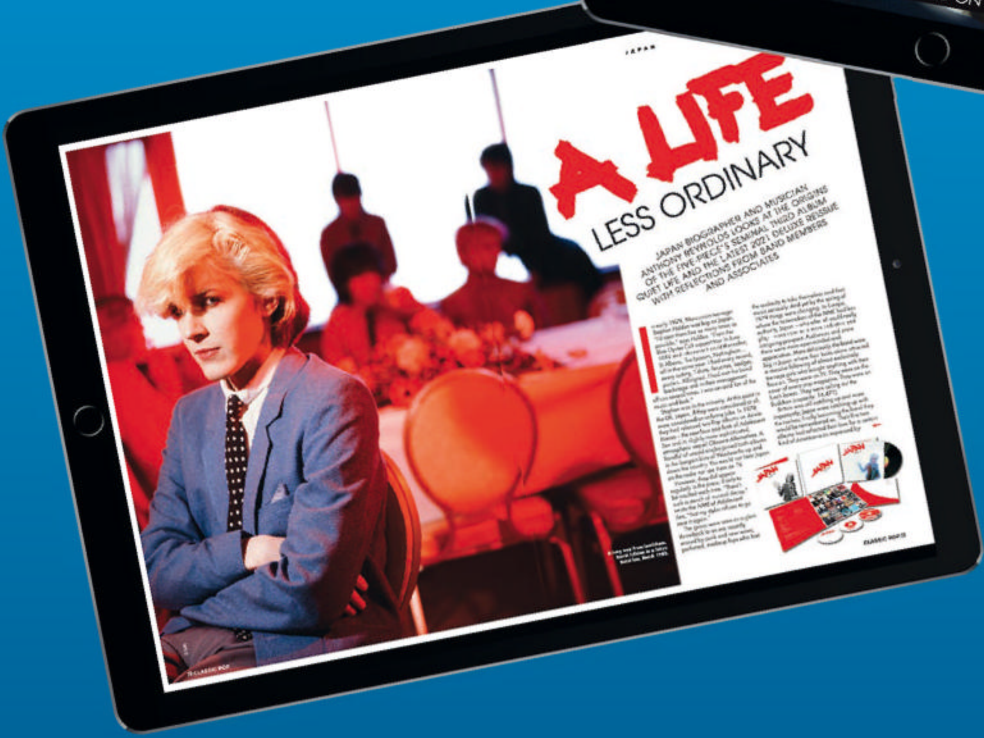
2 MAY 1981

SHEENA EASTON HITS NO.1 IN THE UNITED STATES WITH *MORNING TRAIN (NINE TO FIVE)*

Sheena Easton was arguably the world's first reality TV star. Before Nasty Nick, before Shayne Ward, before Kelly Clarkson, came this shy girl from Glasgow, who television viewers got to know via the BBC documentary show *The Big Time*. It was already on its third series by the time it got round to Sheena Shirley Easton. Created by *That's Life!*'s Esther Rantzen, its mission each episode was to follow a member of the public whose star was on the ascendance. Previous instalments had covered comedians, trapezists, racing car drivers and jockeys, before Easton featured on 2 July 1980. The episode showed her recording the single *Modern Girl*, which would become her first hit in the UK, where it nestled at No.8. But it was with its follow-up, *Morning Train (Nine To Five)* that she would taste her first US No.1. In the UK, it peaked at No.3 and was simply titled *9 To 5*. Though the single would be Sheena's only American chart-topper, the song made her a bona fide star Stateside, kicking off a career that would see her sing a Bond theme (*For Your Eyes Only*) and later team up with one of the decade's hottest talents in Prince for the single *U Got The Look* (UK No.11, US No.2). Despite her titanic fame in the 1980s, however, it's been a full 24 years since Easton's last album of new material. Time, we think, for a comeback. **Steve O'Brien**

CLASSIC POP

Enjoy reading all the latest news from your favourite artists, plus in-depth interviews, reviews, competitions and more when you sign up.



FREE DIGITAL ISSUE WHEN YOU JOIN!

Sign up today at classicpopmag.com/newsletter

THE WAILERS

40th Anniversary Of

LEGEND

the best of

BOB MARLEY

and the WAILERS

PLAYING THE ALBUM *in full*

NOVEMBER 2024

Wed 13 - NEWCASTLE NX

UPGRADED DUE TO PHENOMENAL DEMAND

Thu 14 - GLASGOW O_2 Academy

Fri 15 - MANCHESTER O_2 Ritz

Sat 16 - SHEFFIELD Leadmill

Tue 19 - LEEDS O_2 Academy

Wed 20 - CARDIFF Tramshed

Thu 21 - CAMBRIDGE Junction

Fri 22 - LONDON Indigo at The O2

Sat 23 - OXFORD O_2 Academy

Sun 24 - BOURNEMOUTH O_2 Academy

Mon 25 - BRISTOL O_2 Academy

GIGSANDTOURS.COM ◆ TICKETMASTER.CO.UK

AN SJM CONCERTS PRESENTATION